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ABSTRACT

This booklet features eight K-6 teachers from the region served by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) whose work illustrates research-based principles of how children learn to read and write and the environments that support that learning. (These principles were presented as 13 core understandings about learning to read in NWREL's 1997 research synthesis, "Building a Knowledge Base in Reading.") The booklet presents vignettes of diverse teachers and their K-6 classrooms. The teachers in the booklet represent rural, suburban, and urban settings; various student demographics; a range of teaching experience; and various teaching styles--while the teachers were chosen to illustrate the core understandings, they are anything but uniform in their literacy instruction. The teachers in the booklet vary in the ways they organize their classrooms, group students, select and use materials, and assess reading development; some are more systematic in their skill and strategy instruction, while others plan instruction as needed in the context of a specific reading experience. In each vignette in the booklet, selected core understandings have been highlighted, but others are readily apparent as well; vignettes are organized by grade level. In addition to the core understandings, the booklet stresses that learning to read requires access to critical components, among them adequate time, appropriate texts, knowledgeable teachers, and useful demonstrations about how reading and writing work. An appendix lists the International Reading Association/National Council of Teachers of English standards for the English language arts. (NKA)

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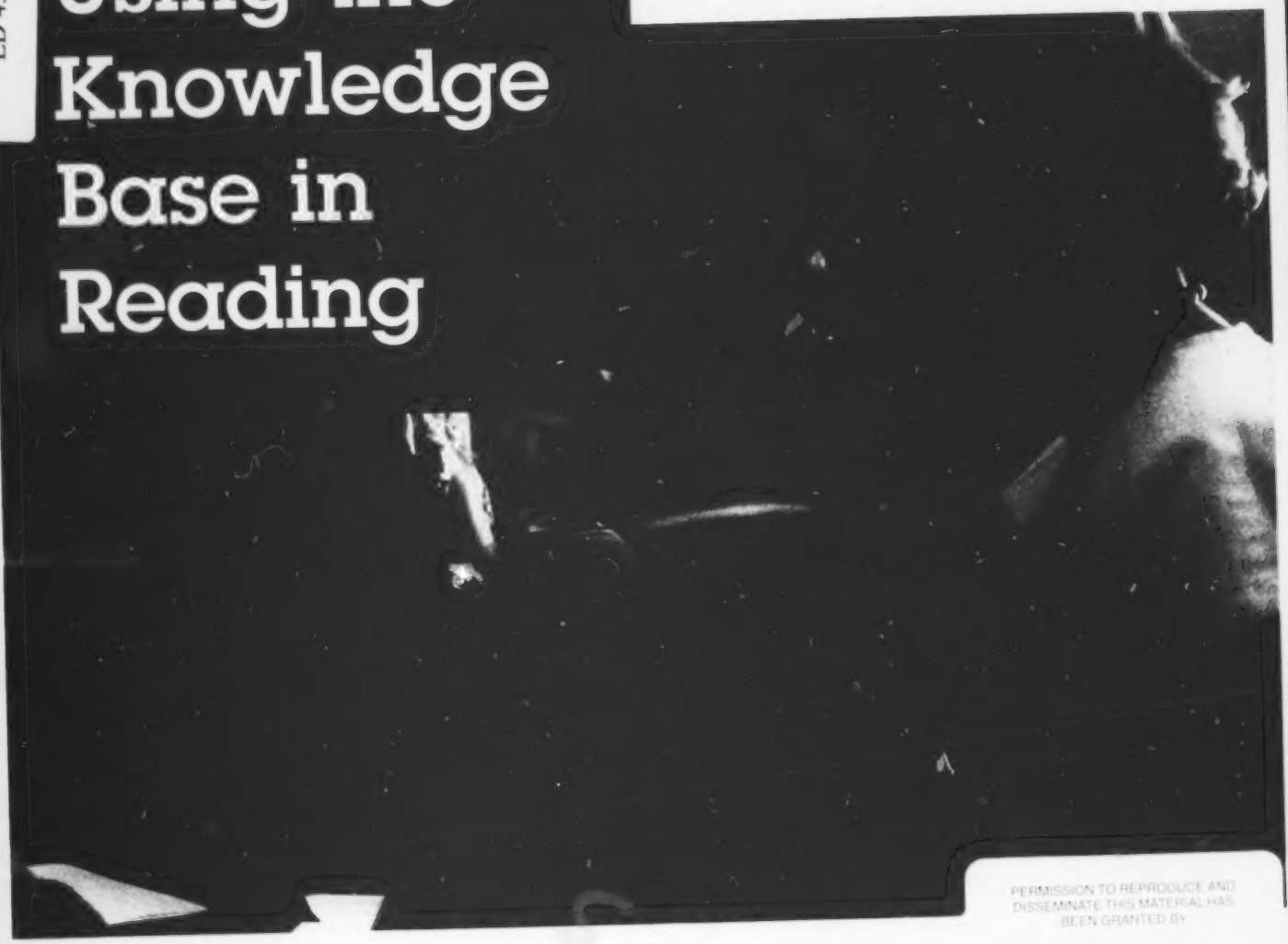
Using the Knowledge Base in Reading



Teachers at Work

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Using the Knowledge Base in Reading

Teachers at Work

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July 1999

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INTRODUCTION

"Effective teachers are the only absolutely essential element of an effective school."

(Allington and Cunningham, 1996)

Research on Reading

The last 30 years have provided a wealth of background research that helps us better understand the complexity of learning to read and write. Currently, the range of research has produced a wide variety of discussions, publications, conferences, panels, debates, and even legislative action. And while most reading professionals would agree that the extensive body of research on reading provides helpful direction to teachers, they would caution that it does not point to a "silver bullet," that is, to one method of reading instruction that is superior and effective for all learners (Duffy, 1998; Allington, 1997; Pearson, 1996). In fact, our current focus on method may obscure the conclusion, echoed in the opening quote, drawn over 30 years ago from *First Grade Studies* (Bond & Dykstra, 1967) and borne out in the research since then that the key factor in children's reading achievement is the quality of teaching. Teachers are central to the process, orchestrating many strategies, organizing for instruction, applying extensive professional knowledge.

The 1998 report from the National Research Council, *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, affirms the crucial role of teacher knowledge in children's reading development, noting:

> The critical importance of the teacher in the prevention of reading difficulties must be recognized, and efforts should be made to provide all teachers with adequate knowledge about reading and the knowledge and skill to teach reading or its developmental precursors. It is imperative that teachers at all grade levels understand the course of literacy development and the role of instruction in optimizing literacy development.
>
> (Snow et al., 1998, p. 9-10)

From Research Into Practice

So the question becomes, what do effective teachers of reading know and do? This collection of classroom vignettes provides a response. It features teachers from the region served by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) whose work illustrates research-based principles of how children learn to read and write and the environments that support that learning. These principles were presented as 13 core understandings about learning to read in the 1997 research synthesis, *Building a Knowledge Base in Reading*, published by NWREL, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), and the International Reading Association (IRA). The core understandings are:

1. Reading is a construction of meaning from written text. It is an active, cognitive, and affective process.
2. Background knowledge and prior experience are critical to the reading process.

3. Social interaction is essential in learning to read.
4. Reading and writing develop together.
5. Reading involves complex thinking.
6. Environments rich in literacy experiences and models facilitate reading development.
7. Engagement in the reading task is key in successfully learning to read.
8. Children's understandings of print are not the same as adults' understandings.
9. Children develop phonemic awareness and knowledge of phonics through a variety of literacy opportunities, models, and demonstrations.
10. Children learn successful reading strategies in the context of real reading.
11. Children learn best when teachers employ a variety of strategies to model and demonstrate reading knowledge, strategy, and skills.
12. Children need the opportunity to read, read, read.
13. Monitoring the development of reading processes is integral to student success.

These core understandings share with the National Research Council's report an emphasis on teacher knowledge, meaningful engagements with print, and effective strategy development as crucial to children's reading success. In addition, the core understandings reflect national, state and local standards in reading/language arts. (See Appendix for the *NCTE/IRA Standards for the English Language Arts.*) The standards set forth our best vision of what students should know and be able to do as readers and writers. As the standards spark discussions and curriculum development from the state to the classroom level, they inform instructional planning. But standards are only a first step. The important work of designing literacy instruction to ensure that all children meet the standards is done by knowledgeable teachers.

Illustrating Good Practice

After the NCTE/IRA standards were published in 1995, teachers who had participated in their development requested a series of publications that would illustrate what the standards looked like in actual classrooms at different grade levels. In producing that series, NCTE trusted the strength and validity of the standards. As NCTE Associate Executive Director Karen Smith writes in the Foreword to *Standards in Practice, K-2* (Crafton, 1996),

> We decided that if we asked English language arts teachers who were doing interesting and challenging work in their classrooms to reflect … on their practices and to tell us their stories, the standards would be there, already at work in students' learning.

With the same idea, following the publication of *Building a Knowledge Base in Reading*, the authors worked with an advisory committee to identify teachers in NWREL's service region (Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington) whose work reflected the core understandings and, equally important, led to student reading success. We observed eight teachers as they worked with students and interviewed them on a number of topics, including their beliefs about literacy development, their instructional and assessment practices, the role of professional development in their teaching, and the impact of standards on their teaching. As one of our featured teachers (Mary Laughlin, of Portland, Oregon) said, "In translating theory into practice, I constantly test it. I think the action is really in the classroom with those 25 kids learning to read."

We agree and hope that teachers and other interested parties who read these vignettes will enjoy visiting the classrooms and learning from the knowledgeable—and diverse—teachers they will meet there. These K-6 teachers represent rural, suburban, and urban settings; various student demographics; a range of teaching experience; and various teaching styles. While we chose these teachers to illustrate the core understandings, they are anything but uniform in their literacy instruction. As you will see, some are more systematic in their skill and strategy instruction, while others plan instruction as needed in the context of a specific reading experience. The teachers vary in the ways they organize their classrooms, group students, select and use materials, and assess reading development.

Still, in all of these classrooms, the core understandings are evident. In each vignette, selected core understandings have been highlighted, but others are readily apparent as well. Readers may wish to note additional core understandings they see as well as specific state reading standards and/or benchmarks addressed in the teaching episode. The vignettes are organized by grade level. The table of contents lists specific topics under each teacher. We encourage teachers to follow their own interests in selecting which vignettes to read and, ideally, to discuss.

In addition to the core understandings, literacy experiences in these classrooms illustrate a conclusion drawn in *Building a Knowledge Base in Reading:* Learning to read requires access to critical components, among them adequate time, appropriate texts, knowledgeable teachers, and useful demonstrations about how reading and writing work.

Providing Access to Critical Components

Knowledgeable and supportive teachers. We have already noted the central importance of the teacher to student learning in reading. It is the teacher who must determine on a daily basis the child's zone of proximal development, the child's instructional level, and how to scaffold the learning process for maximum development of that child as reader, writer, and thinker. Karl Wolf, a kindergarten teacher in Helena, Montana, puts it this way: "In any program, the bottom line is the teacher. The teacher needs to say, 'These are the skills this child needs; these are the skills this child can handle.'"

A related and recurring theme in these vignettes is the importance of teachers as learners. The teachers talk about how they continue to learn their craft. Jacquie Whitmore, a Title I teacher in Anchorage, Alaska, describes how miscue analysis allows teachers to learn from close observation of students, "You never listen to kids read the same once you have that knowledge." Participating in professional conferences has helped Barry Hoonan, a sixth-grade teacher in Redmond, Washington, see his classroom as a work in progress, where he continually refines his thinking as he works with student readers and writers. All of the teachers noted the importance of professional reading to their teaching lives, and mentioned a range of significant influences, including Donald Graves, Kathy Short, Marilyn Adams, Keith Stanovich, Connie Juel, Patricia Cunningham, Jerry Harste, Barbara Flores, Ken and Yetta Goodman, Marie Clay, and Stephen Krashen. The teachers also engage in ongoing conversations with colleagues about teaching and learning.

Appropriate instruction. Joanne Johnson, a fourth/fifth-grade teacher in Springfield, Oregon and Julie DePauw, the school principal, describe how the staff of their new school plan to provide support for low-performing students so that they can achieve the high expectations set for them by state and school standards. The staff is committed to developing a continuum of expectations that both acknowledges where students are and challenges them to progress.

The teachers we visited consider the learner's perspective in designing literacy experiences. Donna Mikkelson, a sixth-grade teacher in Meridian, Idaho, describes the importance of providing necessary background knowledge for some literature. About background knowledge, she notes: "As a teacher, you often don't know. Do they not know? Did they not have that experience? As a teacher, you need to be willing to try things, and you need to be an astute observer of young people."

Demonstrations of how readers, writers, and texts work. Christy Holtman, a kindergarten/first-grade teacher in White Salmon, Washington, models how to read a rhymed selection rhythmically and reminds students, "We want to get fluent; we want to read like we talk." Marty Perlman, a third-grade bilingual immersion teacher in Anchorage, Alaska, leads students in a review of all the types of writing they do and reminds them that "*Nosotros escribimos para comunicarnos* (we write to communicate)." For that reason, she reminds them, it's important to write in ways that are clear and engaging.

Time. Barry Hoonan's sixth-grade students read independently for a total of more than an hour on the day we visit. A student recommends a book to a friend and comments that he wasn't a reader before this class. Cindy Martindale provides extended opportunities for independent and shared reading as well as instruction through guided reading. "Sometimes we go around the circle and say what book we're reading, just to remind everybody that we all should be in the middle of something or at the start of something," she says.

Texts and resources. All of these classrooms have extensive collections of books, organized to help teachers match the right book to the child and displayed in attractive ways. Several teachers noted that they use their own money to add to these classroom libraries. Karl Wolf's science table holds not only the incubator and duck eggs the kindergartners will study, but also eye-catching books about eggs and hatching. He works closely with the librarian to bring in theme-support books throughout the year. At Joanne Johnson's school, principal Julie DePauw describes the library as "the heart of the school"; it is physically in the center of the school, too. She notes that her first priority in staffing the school, which opened in 1997, was to get the best librarian she could.

Other readers. Mary Laughlin's first-graders eagerly retell books they've read recently, thus demonstrating their comprehension and recommending good books to each other. Joanne Johnson's fourth- and fifth-graders not only work with each other in small literature study groups, but also read once a week with their "reading buddies," students in a first-grade class. In Donna Mikkelson's sixth-grade inclusion class, students who struggle get support not only from her but from more able peers with whom they read and discuss books. These students are making greater reading gains than they would in a pull-out program.

Their own reading processes. In these classrooms, assessment and instruction are integrated. Teacher and student self-assessment are focused on identifying areas of strength and areas of need. Children are aware of what they know and can do as readers. Instruction is matched to the child's need. Marty Pellman and her bilingual teaching colleagues in Anchorage, Alaska use reading miscue analysis to identify children's current reading function and then provide instruction to "bump them up" to the next level. Marty's colleague, Elva Cerda, tracks second-graders' growth in both Spanish and English reading and is able to show students that they are making gains as readers in both languages, even if the rate is slower in one than in the other.

Finally, all of these teachers have created classroom communities, each with the stamp of that teacher and those children, but all places where the members feel valued and responsible. Whether it's "reading around the room," in Christy Holtman's class, working with words in Mary Laughlin's, sharing journal entries in Cindy Martindale's, or participating in literature study in Joanne Johnson's, the classrooms have familiar reading and writing routines that help frame the day and provide the children with opportunities and support for becoming better readers and writers.

The teachers in these vignettes provide real-life illustrations of instruction based on our best understandings of how children learn to read. We hope you will enjoy meeting them and their students. In addition, we hope that these classroom episodes and the teachers' reflections on their own practice will provide much food for thought and conversation in the best tradition of teachers learning from each other.

Resources

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KARL WOLF
KINDERGARTEN

Central School in Helena, Montana, sits on a hill overlooking Last Chance Gulch, the site of the 1864 discovery of gold in the area. With the population boom that ensued, the city outgrew the one-room school houses that had served its children up until then. So, the state's first graded school—Central—was built in the late 1800s. Pictures in the entry hallway of the school chronicle its long history.

Kindergarten teacher Karl Wolf sees this history as a stabilizing factor for the school. Many of his students have parents and grandparents who attended Central. This is not to say that Central has remained unchanged; one example of its updating is the Montessori program available as an option in grades one through five.

The school's community, while predominantly white, does have some variation, which Karl describes as a good cross-section of society: some professional people, some people in low-income housing. Central is a Title I school, and approximately 30 percent of Karl's kindergartners have been in a Head Start program. With 22 years of experience here at Central, Karl describes the school as providing a structure in which teachers can develop their own style of instruction.

Child-Centered Curriculum

Karl walks through a carpeted hallway on the way to greet his afternoon kindergarten class. The class has 20 children, the maximum number allowed in K-2 classes in the district. Children greet him excitedly and hug him, so that he enters the room surrounded by a moving mass of small bodies. The hallway separates the kindergarten from the other classrooms, and conveniently opens onto the playground just outside. On the wall above the coat hooks are two brightly decorated bulletin boards proclaiming that the children know their "small" and "big" letters, which appear individually on stars. Children's names on colorful spaceships "fly" among the stars.

For a few minutes, children work independently or with a partner on activities of their own choosing: one boy paints at an easel, two girls study the newly installed incubator with duck eggs, and three children try to identify the new objects next to the incubator on the science table. Karl moves among the children, checking a mathematics activity card for one, talking casually with others.

After 15 minutes, he calls the children to the rug area, where they sit in a large circle as he takes attendance by having the children count off. Each day a child is "star of the day," and today is Millie's turn. She uses the pointer to lead the class in a review of the calendar (days of the week, dates, today, what tomorrow will be). Then, wearing an Uncle Sam hat, she leads the children in the pledge of allegiance. Next, she points to the alphabet letters at the front of the room and leads the children in reciting the alphabet, then saying it in sign language. The effect is of a chorus followed by mime; all the children participate. Afterwards, Karl invites the children to spell their names in sign language, and they eagerly comply.

Next, Karl involves the children in a fast-paced numbers review, with children calling out "magic numbers" (today's are ones that use the same number twice; Karl gives the first one, "88," and children take turns coming up with others). As Karl moves the pointer quickly around the circle, the children count off numbers. Joey, holding a stuffed animal named Puff, takes two turns, one for himself and one for Puff. (Earlier Joey had asked if Puff could take part, and the class had said yes.)

Rich Literate Environments

One half-hour into the class, Karl leads the children to the science table, just inside the front door. Urging them to stand close so that they can all see, he explains that the strange looking machine on the science table is an incubator, with duck eggs in it. He describes how the children will teach the ducklings how to swim when the duck eggs hatch. They'll also write a book about the eggs hatching. The children are very attentive, leaning forward to see the incubator up close. Karl draws their attention to a colorful collection of books he's arranged next to the incubator: *Chickens Aren't the Only Ones*, *Chicken Sunday*, *Egg to Chick*, *Eggs, Hatch!*, and *Just Plain Fancy*. He invites questions from them, reminding them first of how questions are different from statements or stories:

Child: "What's the noise?"

Teacher: "That's the fan."

Child: "Why does the fan go?"

Child: "How does the water get into the incubator?"

Karl works closely with the school's librarian as he designs learning experiences such as this one. He credits her with stocking the library with a wealth of fiction and nonfiction books to support this and other learning themes. "What's important," he says, "is that she knows children's literature and she's got good taste."

After making a calendar for the new month, the children go out to recess. When they return, they gather in a circle on the rug once more and Karl picks up with the story of Planet Distar. He has created a tale of aliens with letter names who travel from Planet Distar to earth, meet Jimmy and Janie, and take part in a series of adventures with them. As Karl reviews the story, he asks the children to name the characters and what they say (D, the guard, makes the sound of d, etc.). In today's episode, Black Bart (a bad alien) turns from a life of hurting people and vows to be helpful. Lobo, the white wolf, whom he'd kidnapped, has been saved by Shauna, a lover of animals. The children seem pleased that Black Bart has reformed. They eagerly supply details on characters and events from earlier episodes of the story, and several offer predictions about upcoming episodes. But when Karl tells the story, speaking very softly, the children are raptly attentive.

Engagement

Karl includes a great deal of storytelling in his literacy curriculum. Early on in his career, he used storytelling to jumpstart children's imaginations, which were stunted, he felt, by the amount of television they'd already seen. Children showed tremendous interest in these storytelling experiences, so he continued to provide them. His story of Planet Distar allows him to embed letter-sound information in an entertaining, engaging format. In this and other stories, he often invites the children to get involved by illustrating the story as he tells it. This exercise, along with their own original stories, provides Karl with good information on their developing sense of story and their comprehension ability.

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After 20 minutes of storytelling, the children remain in the circle and play "sounds in your mind." Karl points to a letter and tells the children, "If you can make the sound for this letter in your mind, you can lie on your back." One child volunteers a sound, and several fall back with glee; the game continues until all of the children are happily lying on the floor.

And now, for the final half-hour of class, it's centers time. One boy grins and hugs Karl, proclaiming "I love centers! I have 50 centers!" Centers are early literacy, mathematics, and handwriting activities that Karl has designed or collected for the children to work on independently or with others, as they wish. The carpeted hallway functions as an additional work space for the children, especially useful for spreading out center materials to work on alone, in pairs, or in small groups. At center time children choose from an array of numbered and color-coded envelopes or bins (red for reading, blue for mathematics, and green for handwriting). Tubs with centers are on shelves along the wall, and manila envelopes with centers are in a wire rack. Books which had been in the rack early in the year, have now moved into the spaceship (the quiet reading area) and onto theme locations such as the science table. As Karl describes it, "By the middle of the year, centers take center stage."

Each child has a laminated card with 100 center numbers on it. Reading centers contain materials on skills such as letter-sound matching, patterning with words, and sound blending. As a student completes one and has it checked by Karl, her card gets a sticker on the corresponding number for that center. By this time in the year, there are several children whose cards are nearly full of stickers and the spaceships with children's names on the hallway bulletin board attest to their knowledge of the alphabet. Charting children's movement through the centers lets Karl, the children, and their parents see their progress, and choose what skills to work on next. As he says, "At any time, the child can go out there and see where they are, and it's not competitive. They're working together."

Monitoring Reading Development

In addition to this information on developing letter-sound understandings, Karl monitors the children for interest in literature, attention during storytelling, and production of their own stories, either through writing or through illustration.

In providing the centers and allowing children to choose among them and work either independently or with a partner, Karl feels he is striking an important balance between building important reading and mathematics basics and honoring children's developmental needs.

He traces his teaching philosophy in part to the influence of the British primary system and the Montessori program. This philosophy is the basis for letting children work on their own, work at their own speed, and progress at their own speed. For this reason, although he sees the need for providing structure and some explicit skills instruction, he chooses not to design his program around a curriculum put together, as he says, by a publishing company. His approach to skill instruction, for example letters and sounds, is to present it in an exploratory, choice fashion and allow children to move ahead at their own pace. For him, this supports both the children who are slower to develop reading skills, specifically the alphabetic principle, and those who are quicker to acquire them. Key to him is that everyone is moving ahead, enthusiastic about literacy and confident that they are learning.

Social Interaction

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A keen understanding of young children's development underpins Karl's literacy curriculum. An important element is social interaction. He keeps his whole group instruction to a minimum, instead capitalizing on children's natural aptitude to learn with and from each other. "If you have a class sitting in their desks, getting instruction only from the teacher in the front of the room, you're missing them, and 50, 60, 70 percent of what they can get," he says.

Early in the year, books and literacy materials are abundantly available around the room; children are encouraged to explore and share them. At this point, he describes his curriculum as very play-oriented, with materials designed to invite children to interact with each other and have hands-on experiences with books and other literacy materials. There are a lot of books displayed. A large cardboard castle has an inviting inside space, marked "quiet room," perfect for a few children to sit in with a shared book. The starship has old computer keyboards for use as space-ship control panels and its ongoing use is evident; several books on the floor attest to its use by the morning class today.

Karl explains that as the year progresses, the more play-oriented things are exchanged for the more academic things, such as learning centers. He still reads to the children daily and regularly tells stories. And books are still abundantly displayed and available around the room, but they are increasingly organized to support themes such as egg hatching in a science learning experience.

As the year progresses, Karl also develops more themes in literacy. This class just finished reading as many versions of *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* as Karl could find for them, drawing on help from the school librarian, the children's families, and the public library. After reading all these different versions, the class voted on their favorite (Janet Stevens' version won), and gave that book their own award, the "Kindercott" award. Karl had read the children a number of the winners of the annual Caldecott award for best illustrated children's books, and they had discussed what makes a book worthy of such an honor. When the children learned that their pick had also been named an IRA Children's Choice for that year, they were especially proud.

Rich Literate Environments

As he commonly does with books, Karl provided dramatic play opportunities for the children in their *Three Billy Goats Gruff* theme work: The children created puppet shows and earlier in the week as a grand finale, they had trooped to a local park where they donned masks they'd made for the trolls and the goats and acted out the story. Although today Karl says to the children, feigning gruffness, "I don't ever want to hear 'trip, trap, trip, trap' again," he loves working with children's literature this way and it's clear that they do, too.

Background Knowledge & Prior Experience

Karl builds on children's interests, as well as their needs, in designing the literacy curriculum. Over half of the ideas for classroom activities and topics come from the students, he says. He describes how two years ago, his morning kindergarten class did an extensive unit on poetry: reading, writing, reciting poetry and making individual poem books. "These kids were really into poetry. But the same material with the afternoon class, lasted four days, and they were done," he says. "I could see that we were beating a dead horse; these kids were not interested in learning poems."

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Children Take Responsibility for Learning

Karl brings a contagious enjoyment to his teaching; no one should have to be bored. That's why he prefers working with many different versions of a story, such as *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, rather than reading the same story to children several times. And that's also why he makes adaptations in materials designed by publishing companies.

One of these is DISTAR™, a direct instruction, skills-based approach to beginning reading. While Karl uses some aspects of the program, he makes it his own, creating the running story about the planet Distar, from which aliens with letter sounds for names travel to earth, and to which the children are "flying" as they learn their letters and sounds. Another is Alpha Time™. This program uses inflatable "letter people" to introduce children to the alphabet. These colorful figures still hang in Karl's room. And Karl notes that the children love these characters with their visual reminders of letters and sounds. Mr. D. is made of doughnuts, for example. The program is designed to span the full year, but Karl finishes it by Christmas. He admits, "I can't take the letter people for nine months of the year," but adds, more seriously, that he sees his task as exposing children to the alphabet, letters, and sounds, talking about them as they read and engage in storytelling. He wants to bombard them with lots of different stimuli for literacy, and knows they'll begin to pick it up. He wants to keep the children moving (both physically and cognitively), exploring, adding to their knowledge about reading and how it works.

Karl expects the children to take on new challenges, such as joining the reading club, when they're ready. They take the initiative, and then Karl helps them to pick a little book that they can read and take home (his collection of little books is leveled by difficulty). Karl encourages the children to go on choosing appropriate books, and he reminds parents that the purpose is not to master reading at this point, but to have an enjoyable reading experience with someone at home.

The children know that Karl has high expectations for them, and that they can do the work. He illustrates this with a story from an earlier class. A new student, working on a project with others at a table, complained, "Mr. Wolf, I can't do this." The child next to him said, "Ohhhh, BIG mistake. You don't have to do a great job, but don't ever tell him you can't do it." Karl laughed and told him, "Do the best you can."

Mastery of the letters and sounds is an end of the year goal for kindergarten, but not one that's set in concrete, that is, that would keep them from going on to first grade. Karl explains that he does many things with the children to engage them in letter-sound play. "I try to make parents aware that this doesn't all happen on October 31st, as reading shouldn't all happen in the second week of first grade," he says. "It's a slow, gradual process, but when it happens, it's an 'aha' experience. My goal is that they absolutely enjoy, have a great time, and see a purpose in learning the letters and the sounds. Whether they can read, whether they've got the sounds of the letters, that by May, 100 percent of them are excited about learning those letters and sounds … and that's a very easy goal for kindergarten because they *are* excited about it if you haven't made it hard."

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Unfortunately, he continues, schools can make learning to read hard, by expecting too much reading proficiency in first grade. "As a school system, we expect *way* too much of these five- and six-year olds when they get to first grade. The stress is in first grade. I think literacy and reading are like anything else. We're not all tremendous soccer or football players; we don't all have the same interests. We're not all going to be great readers or love to read. I have two children. One reads every night for two hours. The other one reads what he needs to get by, and they've both been exposed to the same things and the same programs. More than anything, I think children need to be not frustrated and to be successful. If we could just back off in that first-grade curriculum, we'd see a lot more success."

At the same time, Karl is concerned that school literacy materials often do not contain enough systematic, explicit instruction in the basics, mainly phonics. For new teachers, especially, who are still learning how to identify and meet the needs of primary children, he thinks this is important.

Construction of Meaning

Karl says that approximately half of his kindergartners this year are reading, which pleases him. His goal remains to expose them to literacy and how it works, to help them leave kindergarten feeling that they're ready to learn to read. He minimizes the teacher's role in the process, saying: "I'd like to say that I'm a phenomenal teacher, but it's not that hard to give them the opportunity. They're going to want to learn to read. Given the very basic skills, they can start to pick up both sight reading and reading phonetically."

Still, Karl opts for teacher knowledge over program content anytime. "In any program, the bottom line is the teacher. The teacher needs to say, 'These are the skills this child needs; these are the skills this child can handle.' Everybody has the expectation of doing the very best that they can at their skill level." For Karl Wolf, this knowledge is evident in his responsiveness to children's interests, his awareness of developmental needs, and his joyful engagement in the children's learning. What does he like about kindergarten? "The enthusiasm, the excitement every day, the lack of preassumptions about learning," he says. "They come ready to learn. I can't think of anything I don't like about kindergarten!"

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CHRISTY HOLTMAN

KINDERGARTEN/FIRST GRADE

White Salmon, Washington, is located across the Columbia River and up a hill from Hood River, Oregon. Forty-five minutes east of Portland on I-84, and across a small steel toll bridge, White Salmon is nestled in an area known historically for fruit orchards and, more recently, for excellent wind surfing conditions. Whitson Elementary School sits within the main part of the small town, but draws from the wide rural area the White Salmon School District serves.

A changing economic picture has had an impact on this small town. Many people have moved into the area, drawn by the beauty of the Columbia River Gorge and the close proximity to Portland. At the same time, because of the change from a timber-driven economy to one largely dependent on tourism, and the state's adoption of a welfare to work option, a number of families have moved elsewhere.

School enrollment in this area (including neighboring districts) is declining. At Whitson, the enrollment has gone from 510 to 480 children. The school population is 24 percent Hispanic, two percent Native American, and two percent Asian. Fifty-eight percent of the students are on free and reduced lunch.

Reading the Room

Christy Holtman is teaching a combined kindergarten and first grade this year. The kindergartners come two full days a week and half days on Friday. The first-graders are, of course, there every day, all day. Today is a first grade only day, with 13 of the 17 first-graders present. When the kindergartners are at school, 26 children fill the room.

One child is the chairperson for the day: "Today is Wednesday, the 27th. What was yesterday? What will tomorrow be? The weather is ...."

One of the first activities of the day is to have one or two children lead the rest in "reading around the room" for about 10 minutes. Willie takes the pointer, and moves to the "Five Little Chickens" song hanging on chart paper. She leads the class in singing the song. Then, she moves on to the Baby Chick poem on chart paper in a different part of the room. She passes the pointer to Tom, who has just returned from an errand to the office. Tom selects a poem from a collection housed in a box; he pulls it out, props it up on the easel, and uses the pointer to lead the class as they read the poem together.

Christy's room is filled with opportunities for reading. While it is a visual feast, it is organized in ways so as not to overwhelm. The choices change according to theme, and increase in difficulty as the children progress through the year. Choices on this visit include:

Rich Literate Environments

Poem Box: Laminated cards hold a wide variety of poems.

Word Families: Throughout the room are class-made charts highlighting word families based on phonics lessons. Examples include the children's names with selected consonants, vowels, blends, digraphs, onsets and rimes emphasized; and charts focusing on vowel combinations (ou, ai) placed in locations where children can add examples as they find them in everyday work.

Signs: Usually made by a child, they label objects in the room (calendar, door, window, desk, chair, and so on).

Charts: Poems, songs, stories, and lists are on large charts hanging around the room, on the walls, and from the ceiling. The class is working on a farm unit this month, so many of the poems, songs, and stories have to do with farm animals. Old favorites can also be chosen, however, as they remain accessible to the children.

Directions: Some charts around the room give directions for how to do a task. For example, the writing center holds a chart with directions on how to write a letter, and how to make a "letterlope."

Jokes and Riddles: "Why do chickens lay eggs? Because if they dropped them, they would break!" Jokes and riddles are usually related to the theme of study.

Books are also spread throughout the room. Bookshelves create a divider in the room; they hold a wide variety of fiction, nonfiction, reference books, books written by children as well as by "real" authors. An area where books can be displayed holds books related to the theme of study; currently it holds a wide variety of books on farms and animals. The books range across genre and level. Big books are also displayed throughout the room, used for mini-lessons with children as well as for whole-group experiences.

In an area separate from the library, a collection of tubs holds books leveled as "emergent," "early," or "fluent." At this time in spring, the "early" collection fills three tubs, while "emergent" and "fluent" each fill a single tub. Another tub holds "letter books," in which the text focuses on words with specific letter sounds, including the *Rigby PM* collection and *Alphabet Starters*. Another tub, labeled "blends," holds books which feature them, including *Alphabet Blends* and the *Rigby PM* collection.

Monitoring Reading Development

The teachers at Whitson have worked together to create a book room, a designated area where all reading materials have been leveled and organized systematically. Washington's Essential Academic Learning Requirements Framework for Reading was also used to organize these materials. This helps teachers ensure that children learn to read the wide range of genres called for in the state standards. In addition, Christy has worked with a team of teachers to create a "Running Record Kit" so all teachers can systematically identify the level at which every child is reading. In her own instruction, Christy focuses on the needs of children as determined by her observations and assessments, usually running records.

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Each child has a personal book bin. In it are books at the child's level, chosen with guidance from Christy. Here the children are to keep a selection of books they can read—favorites and new choices—to practice on during their free time. They also keep a "Reading Log," listing the books they have already read. The small, colorful book bins, are lined up on a special shelf with easy access.

A prominently displayed sign reminds students:

Daily 5
1. Read to yourself.
2. Read to someone else.
3. Read something again.
4. Write something.
5. Try something new.

Opportunity to Read

These are the reading/writing tasks the children know they must try to accomplish every day. At the beginning of the year, Christy showed them many ways they might do this. Then, the class brainstormed the following list and posted it as a reminder.

Things to do during reading time:

Read around the room with a pointer.
Read from your book box.
Read a book to a partner.
Read a big book.
Read an ABC book.
Read a book at the listening center.
Read a class book.
Read from your draft notebook.
Read at the overhead.
Read from your anthology.

Christy has hung labels around the room to highlight what good readers and writers do. Lots of these have to do with conventions in writing, partly as a reminder for Christy, so she knows she's including them all the time, and as a support for the children when they begin to put this knowledge into practice. The children have also been invited to label things throughout the room: "door," "chair," and so on. At different times over the year, these have been incorporated into the "reading around the room" routine; the children know print information is all around them.

Christy believes that in order for children to feel comfortable and successful, they must be allowed to reread many things. She has let them create some of the rereading routines, such as reading around the room and rereading the reports they've written. These routines and the classroom setup flow from Christy's philosophy of literacy learning as meaning-based and constructed by the children. For example, in the writing area students can make things by following directions. The projects, such as puppets, trail mix, and letterlopes, are consistent with the theme the class is working on. In each area in the room, certain things will stay the same throughout the year, or the routines will remain the same with a different content focus.

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Modeling What Readers and Writers Do

Christy naturally embeds literacy and mathematics into the day's events. During lunch count, children spell their replies, H-O-T, C-O-L-D. After counting up how many hot lunches: "How do I write 12?" The response: "A one and a two."

Constant modeling is simply a part of the teaching dialogue. After the class has read the room, Christy brings them together on the floor around the easel. "Let's start our writing workshop mini-lesson," she says. She puts up a big book entitled *Pen Pals*, by Wendy Graham, from the SRA Voyages collection of nonfiction for primary students. *Pen Pals* presents six months of correspondence between a child in the city and a child in the country. "What do you think this story might be about?" she asks the class. The students respond: "A friend back and forth?" Christy goes on: "Have you ever heard of a pen pal? Why would you call it a pen pal? Do you like to get stuff in the mail?"

Reading & Writing

Currently, the focus for writing workshop is letter writing. They have already learned about the format of letters; in the writing center, formats and phrases used in letter writing are prominently displayed. They have read many books that incorporate letters as their text. They talked about what a writer does when writing a letter. After the author/illustrator Kim Moreland came in to visit, they wrote a thank you to her together, the draft on chart paper now posted in the writing center. They have also been writing letters to characters in books, using a large, real mailbox as a place to send them.

Christy reads the title and author of the book, moving to the first page of text. "This reminds me of you guys thinking," she says. "You recognize what a letter looks like." Together, they point out the parts of the letter within the text: date, greeting, body, and closing. Christy reads the letter and asks: "See the parentheses here? This is an aside, something additional."

"This is called an introductory letter because he introduced himself. What did we learn about Casey?" The students share a variety of things. Christy sums up: "This is what I noticed: he has siblings … and where does he live?" She turns the page: "Who do you see here? Can you tell me some things?" They talk about the next character; Christy reads the page aloud. They continue through the book, predicting what might happen next. After spending about 15 minutes within the book reviewing letters, Christy announces: "We'll read a bit more later. Now, I want you to write a letter, a practice letter. I thought you could pick someone to write to in the school."

Christy shows the class a form they will use to write their practice letters: "I have a form you can use. It has helper words to help you write your letter. What's the date you will put? What kind of M will you need? Yes, a capital M. What is the first part? The dear part, yes the greeting. What kind of D will you need to use? Yes, a capital … and what else?" Together, they spell: "e-a-r." She continues: "What will you write about? What's coming up? Yes, summer break. It's always polite to ask the person you're writing to what they're going to do. What are some closings you might use? Yes, sincerely." Several children offer other suggestions, and one child adds, "But never *from*!"

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The children find places at the tables arranged throughout the room. For the next 25 minutes, the teacher and a high school aide go around the room, checking on each child at work. They talk with each child to monitor and assess: "Who are you writing to? A lot of us will use questions …." They check on spelling with students, often using scraps of paper to write out words needed by a child; they work with individuals to solve spelling problems, helping them figure it out on their own. "Clap it out: bas ket ball. You can do it!" "You're a first-grader who can find information!" A child has noticed that someone else wrote *right* rather than *write:* "It's a homonym." They look for the chart, can't find the word on it, then another child finds it on a different chart.

Christy always asks the children questions; she often compliments them, reinforcing the ideas they come up with. When she asks them how they figure out the words they want to write, the children suggest using words from different places in the room: "Some of our question words are on the recount chart (when, where, why, who, what) …." As some children complete their letters, she reminds them they can go to writer's workshop when they are finished. Several children go to their own tubs and take out spiral notebooks or stapled books to work on their "piece in progress."

Models & Demonstrations

Christy knows she needs to model how to write in a variety of genres, especially with the implementation of the new Washington State Essential Academic Learning Requirements. Throughout the room, and embedded in Christy's instructional dialogue, are examples of many different genres, both for writing and for reading. Texts for guided reading are often chosen to highlight particular genres, such as nonfiction, procedural or how-to text, report, and fiction. Read alouds always include mention of the text type; for example, ABC books might showcase alliteration and riddles.

Writing workshop focuses on particular genres over the year. For example, a class-made book is entitled *Procedural Writing*. Christy gave the children an outline to follow:

1. What
2. You will need
3. Directions
4. Name

Willie's example: **Walking.**

You will need:

1. legs
2. feet
3. balance
4. help and
5. eye sight

Directions: First stand up and hold on to something. Then let go and try to stand. Then as soon as your (sic) standing then try to lift one leg up and put it in front of the other. Then do the same thing with the other. And keep doing it. Then you are walking.

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Other examples the children chose for procedural writing include how to brush your teeth and how to sharpen your pencil. Christy notes: "I can't expect a kid to write a letter if I don't model it, if I don't do shared writing, shared reading, if I don't keep talking. I want them to see the pattern, and I want to structure it in such a way to give them support in their first attempts."

The children return from PE. Once again, they gather in front of the easel. Christy begins with a mini-lesson on the vowel combination of "ai." She writes up "mail" and "jail." "If it fits this pattern, I want to hear you spell it," she says. They begin to create a list of words with "ai." She then turns to a big book called *Getting the Mail* by Honey Anderson and Bill Reinholtd, from the *Voyages* series published by SRA. They read the story together, in which the days of the week and the week's mail are used as a countdown to a child's birthday. Then, they go back to the "ai" words. "What do you notice?" she asks. "Are you going through all the consonants to create words that will fit the pattern?" They begin to add to the list of words that fit the pattern onto the chart paper. When a child doesn't get it quite right, Christy helps her distinguish the vowel sounds by writing up the attempt, comparing and contrasting the sounds until the child understands an application of the sound to a word. After they have made a rather long list of words, they read it together. Then, she invites the children to come up and "show off three. Try to do something different than what your neighbor did!" The children take the pointer and take turns reading three words; this includes the two ESL children in the group. Christy exclaims: "You guys are just reader bugs! Now, you're going to write in your word families books or your draft notebooks. Let's do 6 …. If you want to write a sentence, that's a good way to do it. Then we'll go to reader's workshop."

Understandings of Print

The children disperse to work at tables around the classroom. Christy begins to work with guided groups. As each small group joins her at a table, for 15-20 minutes, the other children continue to work on completing their word family task. When finished, they get their personal reading tub from the storage area and find a comfortable place to read. Some choose to work at a table while others sit on the floor or the comfortable chair in the reading area. They read quietly, sometimes taking time to write the name of the book they have finished into their reading log. There is a busy, yet subdued, hum throughout the classroom.

Pen Pals Group

Three children, who are reading quite fluently at the end of first grade, come up to the table. Christy pulls out the *Pen Pals* big book she used for the mini-lesson during writer's workshop. She gives an enlarged text copy of the book to each student. "If you're going to look for information, you need to look in the text," she says. "Reread the part of the story we read this morning to yourself. Then we'll write out some things about the first character—and we'll write on a piece of paper folded in half." The children read silently to themselves.

After the children have read the first letter in the text, Christy reminds them that they have inferred some things from the text. They begin to create a list about the author of the first letter, filling the left hand column of the folded paper with characteristics including "pets," "horses," "loves to collect stickers." They turn to the next page. "I read this to you," she says. "Read a few things and find out about Casey."

Complex Thinking

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Within this page, they come to the word "pastimes." They work through the meaning together:

"It means in the olden days, in the past."

"I know why you said that … because it is "past times." That's a good guess. But, let's look again in the story …. You're getting caught up in the "times" part …."

"Again and again?"

"Read the sentence again."

"My favorite pastimes are …."

"Oh, favorite things to do …."

"Pastimes are things to do when we aren't working."

They move on, continuing to discuss the two characters. They add a list of characteristics to the right hand column on the folded paper: "has a big brother," "rides a skateboard," "he draws," "funny (joker)," "lost a pet." They read the next letter together, out loud. They come to parentheses, and Christy asks:

"What are these?"

"Homonyms?"

"Apostrophes?"

"Parentheses."

They finish the page, and Christy tells them to finish reading the story on their own. "Well, there's a surprise ending," she says. "Take your draft notebook, and continue to make a list of characteristics, just like we began here. You will need to finish this by Monday. I'm going to bring in another kind of writing, a biography, and we're going to write biographies of Casey and Alistair. So take notes about Casey and Alistair."

Dear Mabel Group

Three children come up to the table. She gives a small copy of the book, *Dear Mabel*, to each child. Written by Pat Cunningham and published by Scott Foresman in their Little Celebration Press series, the book contains short rhyming letters between two children, Molly and Mabel.

"What kind of book do you think this is?"

"A letter!"

"Why?"

"Because it says 'Dear.'"

"What is the name of the character?"

"Mabel."

"I'm going to give you a hint, it's a rhyme book. Let's look at the pictures and predict what is going to happen."

Together, they do a "picture walk" through the text. They look at what the pictures tell about the story. Then, they go through and read the story together so they can hear the rhyme.

"What do you see on the table? What will happen next?"

"Table and Mabel rhyme!"

"Who do you think that girl is?"

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The children continue to read through the story together as Christy cues and helps them. "Where's the rhyme? Read it like a rhyme …" Christy snaps her fingers in rhythm to help the children get the flow of the text. "We want to get fluent … we want to read like we talk."

Models & Demonstrations

"What's going to happen next?"

"She's going to write back …."

"Who will it be?"

"Maybe after this time she'll write back, then come back …."

"Does anything repeat itself?"

The children reread it again.

"I like the way you read it like a question. What else do you notice?"

The children try it on their own.

"Did you hear how fast you read it? It didn't trick you at all! Let's do it the fast way!"

They come to the end of the book. "Let's practice it again!" They reread the last few pages. They practice at the table to finish on their own. "Was there a surprise ending? It would be fun to do a recount, such as 'Dear Luis, Dear Luis …."

Several ESL students are in this group. These children are included in regular classrooms, with the teachers working closely with the ESL teachers. Some of the books used in guided reading groups are also available in Spanish.

Getting the Mail Group

"This book looks familiar!" Christy greets the next group of children who come up to the table. "This is the book we used this morning in our reading mini-lesson. It also has some good ways to do chunking, there are lots of -ing words. Who is it written by? OK, we're going to chunk the words …" She demonstrates to the children how they can clap out syllables to "chunk" the words they need to decode, that is, break a word down to see familiar parts in it. "See what you did with that! I see an -ing, I cover it up …" This is a book with a cyclical pattern, based on the days of the week. The children pick up on the pattern. "Read page two in your head, then point to the word that shows you what came in the mail." They read the letter together, pointing to what came in the mail. "What about -ly?" Christy points back to "daily" on the chart from the earlier mini-lesson. "Read these two pages. They talk about what he'll do to 'post' it—that means to mail it. Find the word that shows the type of mail he posted." The children read; Christy brings them back to focus on the text: "Did you have any trouble with 'invitations?'" She writes "directions" and "invitations" on the chart. "What do you notice about the two words? What does -tion say?" They continue on: "On Wednesday, point with your finger, what came in the mail?" Christy then tells this group to finish the book on their own at their desks.

Phonemic Awareness & Phonics Knowledge

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Song Group

After nearly an hour, Christy has had the chance to work with all of her students. Another group approaches the table for yet another lesson.

"We're going to read a song today," she tells them. A flash of excitement passes around the table as she begins to write on the board. First the letter *m*, followed, slowly, by the letter *y*. "This word is a compound," she says, and offers them two more clues as she continues writing: the letter *s*, and then *e*.

A child guesses the word: "Myself!" she shouts.

Next, Christy moves on to contractions. She writes the words *I am* on the board.

"This is called a contraction," she says, and covers up the *a*. "The word *I'm* is made up of two words, *I* and *am*.

She shows the students a few other things she knows they'll run into in the book she has chosen for today's lesson, *Mail Myself to You*, based on an old Woody Guthrie song.

She distinguishes among the sounds made by *st*, *str*, and *gl*. They also do a picture walk through the book.

Finally, after the lesson is completed, Christy and the students read and sing the song, also displayed on a chart, available for use during reading the room:

> "I'm going to wrap myself in paper, I'm going to dab myself with glue,
> Stick some stamps on top of my head. I'm going to mail myself to you …"

Creating Conditions for Success

Christy believes she must provide certain conditions in her classroom if her students are going to become readers and writers. They are: good modeling for children, a print-rich environment, and demonstrations of how texts work. She knows teachers must be able to explain why they are doing something in their classrooms, and understand how children learn and how to provide the opportunities and supports for that learning. Children shouldn't be expected to do anything for which they haven't been given good models and demonstrations, and clear explanations of what's expected of them. Children also need to be allowed the time to practice, so that teachers can see what skills the children are using and what understandings they're developing.

Christy's teacher talk embodies the conditions she believes to be so critical to her students' success. She talks to children all the time, explaining what she is doing as she demonstrates something she wants them to do. Every moment is transformed into a learning experience: "Look what's happening in this book! Look what this author did! I bet you that this is why he did it …"

Background Knowledge & Prior Experience

Prior knowledge is critical to successful literacy development. Every child brings to the learning experience something a bit different, and the way they recreate meaning for themselves will also be a bit different. When prior experience hasn't been provided for the children, Christy reads to them. This provides a little more support, which some need. She also believes if there is a gap of knowledge and/or experience, you have to look at the learner and know how much support to give them. Knowing the resources, knowing the learner, and then providing the support are critical elements in Christy's teaching. This knowledge may translate into providing instruction for different learning styles, including more and varied practice, and/or different kinds of modeling. The teacher is constantly observing, adjusting, and moving the children onto the next step when they are ready.

Christy's classroom is a balance of teacher-directed and student-chosen activities. The children work with her in groups, focusing on particular instruction and practice. Then they are on their own, finishing work and making choices from throughout the room. The movement from teacher modeling to children practicing the strategies is critical to the success of this classroom. In this way, the children apply and internalize the reading and writing knowledge Christy has shared with them.

Christy has high expectations for independence. She quotes New Zealand literacy educator and consultant, Margaret Mooney, who says: "Independence is not a stage to be reached. It's at every level, and if you look at children and you provide for independence at every level, you give them the tools, give them the routines, tell them your expectations, and tell them, 'This is what you do when you come in.' Then I let them try it, but I always ask, 'What did you do that was independent today?' They're practicing, and working and using their skills. I also tell them when they've made a good choice." And, in Christy's room, her students are proving the wisdom of this advice, developing independence and confidence as readers and writers.

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MARY LAUGHLIN
FIRST GRADE

Mary Laughlin's first-graders wend their way to the portable classroom outside of Sabin Elementary School in Portland, Oregon. Iris are blooming outside, along with other attempts made by the class to bring spring to the Pacific Northwest.

Sabin is one of Portland Public School's Early Childhood Education Centers (ECEC), offering a half-day pre-K program for four-year-olds and full-day kindergarten for five-year-olds. Children from outside the school's designated attendance area may attend ECECs; in Sabin's case, this accounts for upwards of 30 percent of the school's population. In Mary's first-grade classroom, 50 percent of the children live outside of the designated school boundaries. Seventy-one percent of the children qualify for free/reduced lunches. Of the school's 497 students in grades pre-K through five, just over two-thirds are minority students, mostly African-American, some Hispanic and Asian.

The children come into the classroom, hanging up coats and chatting amiably to each other. Ms. Laughlin greets each child at the door, then moves around the room interacting with the children. On the board, there are directions for the children to complete page 13, lines 1-5 in their handwriting workbooks. On many of the children's desks, there are piles of books, at least two, in some cases four, five, or six. Several children are beginning to read through them, others are exchanging and talking about their books. The children take their seats at desks in groupings of four to six.

By 8:50, it's time to begin the day. Mary and the children exchange greetings. Then the children begin to work on the handwriting task as their teacher begins the routines of the day: taking attendance, lunch count, and so on. She reminds them: "You can read a book when you are finished ..." Homework is checked in by the children at this time as well.

Purposeful uses of print are everywhere in the room. For example, the class rules are prominently displayed for all to see:

Be safe.
Be fair.
Be kind.
Be respectful.

Labels, written by the teacher, dot the room:

chalkboard. *This is a chalkboard.*
computer. *This is a computer.*
telephone. *This is a telephone.*

In designated areas, examples of children's informal, spontaneous use of writing and reading are displayed, including pictures and notes to their teacher. Pictures of each child, with his first name printed underneath, are on a colorful bulletin board in the front of the room. Posters and charts around the room support reading. A word wall, containing words the children have been collecting and building through their word study fills the majority of one wall in the classroom.

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The room contains an extensive library (about 3,000 books) attractively displayed in a number of locations: one corner has books on easy-to-reach shelves; not far away are seven tubs of books grouped according to Reading Recovery levels. Each tub holds approximately 50 books and spans three levels. Elsewhere, colorful boxes hold books grouped by topic. Mary has worked hard to assemble excellent books for the children and to display them in ways that will attract the children to pick them up and read.

The children have moved quickly through their handwriting tasks and are beginning to read through favorite titles: *One Fish, Two Fish* by Dr. Seuss and many "Arthur" books by Marc Brown. Soon, Mary calls for their attention and asks them to put books aside to prepare to work with letter cards.

Addressing the Alphabetic Principle: How, When, for Whom?

Phonemic Awareness & Phonics Knowledge

On the board, Mary has written the letters *a r s u d h t y*. The children are pulling out packets of alphabet cards from their desks. The room is filled with the sounds and names of letters as the children recite the letters they are laying out in front of them. They are reminded to look in the basket if a letter is missing from their collection. "First look on the floor, then look in the basket," she says. All other letters are put away for the time being; some children are already making words from the assigned letters, trying to come up with the "mystery word," the challenge to make a word using all of the day's letters. As the children are preparing their cards, Mary moves about the room, observing, monitoring, and assisting as needed.

Mary has made a conscious decision to spend significant time on what she terms "word study." Her own investigations of the research on reading have run the gamut: from Frank Smith and Don Holdaway, to Marilyn Jager Adams, Linnea Ehri, Keith Stanovich, and Connie Juel. From the vantage point of her own practice, she works to find a way to include all the elements of learning to read she feels her students need. Mary has modeled her instruction in letter-sound connections on the work of Cunningham (1994, 1995), McCracken (1996), and Henderson (1981), moving from very intense work in the fall to shorter, more focused activities in the spring. Now, in late spring, the students are doing a variety of word study activities 20-30 minutes a day. Today's lesson is adapted from Cunningham and Hall's (1994) *Making Words* materials.

The children are engaged in their task, familiar with the routine:

Engagement

"That's an upside down *p*!"

"I'm thinking … what is the mystery word?"

"I know how to spell 'bed!'"

Calling for their attention, Mary begins to give clues for "making words."

"We've talked about this, it's three letters … it's try … let's say it tr-y. What is it? Tr …"

Students are sounding out the letters and looking for letters that represent the sounds they are saying.

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After most children have attempted to make this word, Mary calls on Tom to take the letters in the pocket chart and make the word "try." He does. The children cross check their own work and agree he has done this correctly. Tom celebrates his success with a small victory dance back to his desk.

The next word: "dry." Ronnie makes it in the pocket chart; all children agree he has spelled it right. Mary pushes their knowledge: "Who can give me another 'dr' word?"

The children begin to list the words:

drain
drat (from the James Marshall "fox" books)
dress
drink

"Now, let's change two letters in *dry* to make *shy*—a person who doesn't like to talk."

This "working with words" is fast paced, moving kids through a variety of experiences with word patterns and families. Mary continues to talk about the letters, their placement, and their similarities and differences. The lesson ends with the mystery word. The children know it needs to be a word they know and they've read. After two children have made this word, Mary provides a clue: It begins with *th*. Then, a really big hint: It has a capital T. Exclamations of "I got it!" echo throughout the room. "The word is Thursday!!" On another day, the children will review today's letters and patterns, perhaps sorting some of the words or finding new words with similar patterns. These experiences help the children to notice words and parts of words in their independent reading and writing. A typical comment from a student shows this connection, "My book has one of the words we were talking about!"

Phonemic Awareness & Phonics Knowledge

The word study reflects Mary's ongoing efforts to strengthen the children's reading skills. As an experienced professional, she constantly explores theories and research to create the foundation for informed practices in her classroom. She has continued to question, read, and research on her own: How much? When? To whom? Where do the phonics/word structure understandings fit into the big picture of first-graders learning to read and write. Ever a pragmatist, Mary looks for the practical applications of theory.

Five or six years ago, she began to look closely at children's spelling development. She was concerned that holistic theories and practices of reading instruction at times gave children the unintended message that understanding how words work doesn't matter. An important turning point for Mary occurred when she followed a group of children from first grade into second grade. She saw the problems they experienced figuring out more complicated words. She began to search for effective ways to give children the basic knowledge they needed about sound-symbol relationships and to create experiences where they could apply what they were learning, supporting their development over time.

Models & Demonstrations

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After completing a year-long sabbatical the previous year, Mary began the school year with a renewed commitment to helping the first-graders in her classroom. "The one thing I thought this year is that I want these kids to be the best readers and writers they can be," she says. "When I came back this year, the feeling that they need that from me led me to implement some different strategies. In translating theory into practice, I constantly test it. I think the action is really in the classroom, with those 25 kids learning to read." Mary has thus moved to a more direct, sequenced teaching and practice of skills that will make first-grade readers eventually more facile and automatic in word recognition.

Purposeful Reading and Writing

The children put their letter cards away. They are invited to choose a book they would like to retell to the rest of the class, and to put it in front of them. Retelling is one of the skills called for in Oregon's reading comprehension benchmarks; Mary has been working hard on helping these first-graders come to understand the elements of a successful retelling. The children come up to the designated area on the floor. They discuss the rules for choosing a student to retell (Mary has decided to pick names out of the can of popsicle sticks) and go over the required elements of a retelling together:

1. Title, author
2. Characters: the important ones
3. Main idea: what happens, main problem of the book, what the characters are doing (only some), main part of the book; tell in a few words, one sentence
4. Setting
5. Beginning, middle, end; tell something from each part.

After this review, the children are reminded to be sure to look at their audience.

Carrie is chosen to go first. She retells the story of *The Three Wishes.* She describes the characters (a big cat and a fat pig), the setting (the cat's house), the main idea (a fairy comes and gives the cat wishes; the pig wishes for a wig). In the middle, she continues, the cat and the pig hurt each other, then the fairy comes and gives them three wishes; and, in the end, they have a little chat and become friends. Mary's thoughtful questions both support and challenge the children in their retellings:

Mary asks, "Did you learn anything?"

Carrie replies, "Yes. Don't hurt people … or you'll get madder."

"Does this story remind you of any other story?"

Jennie replies, "Yes, the story about Amanda the Pig, because the characters get mad."

"Carrie, do you think the pig and the cat will remain friends?"

"They don't say."

"Yes, you have to think."

"Yes, because they had a chat."

Complex Thinking

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Mary addresses additional components of retelling—evaluating the story and making personal connections to it—informally. She is building a foundation, preparing the children for retelling tasks that are now beyond their independent capability.

Two more children retell a book. Then Mary describes another way to give a retelling—a shorter way, because kids may want to read the book right away: "You can give the title, the author, the main idea, and why you liked it. It's a little different from a retelling." In this way, the children have yet another opportunity to practice summarizing what they have read. Mary has modeled this skill many times, summarizing things she has read aloud to the children. Children need the opportunities to see patterns—in words, in stories—over and over again to gain automaticity.

Models & Demonstrations

One child tells about *Arthur's Computer Disaster* by Marc Brown.

"The book is about Arthur's Mom tells Arthur not to do something, but he does."

"Tell them what you thought about the book," Mary asks.

"I thought it was a good book."

"Why?"

"It taught me a lesson: If your Mom tells you not to do something, then *don't* do it!"

After 20 minutes of retelling, the class takes a five-minute break. After brief trips to the bathroom, all children settle into reading, either to each other or to adults in the room.

Then, Mary transitions into writing time, gathering the children around her on the floor in the front of the room. "Raise your hand if you haven't finished your biography of Martin Luther King, Jr.," she says. She asks who is doing what, then reminds them to choose paper from the back counter as they are finishing their writing projects. The children spread out around the room to work on a variety of writing projects. Some children are finishing the biographies; those children who are finished are working on various kinds of writing. Mary moves through the room, working with individual children: listening to them read aloud a story in progress, checking a finished product, editing, revising.

Children are using a variety of strategies to write:

Tom, writing a book about basketball and football, remarks: "I draw the pictures first, then I write the words."

Jennie, writing an Easter story and Amy, completing her Martin Luther King, Jr. biography, help each other with spelling: "Do you know other letters for 'f'?"

"Yes, ph like in phone (I can spell phonics)."

"How do you spell 'steal'? Oh, it needs an 'a'!"

"How do you spell 'slavery'? Oh, it needs a y at the end, like in trophy ..."

Reading & Writing

All the children have a personal dictionary to keep track of familiar sight words and of words they use frequently in their writing. There is also a word wall with the words from their word study throughout the year to which they can refer. Tim notes the copyright sign means "no copying!"

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Extending What Children Know About Language

Mary thinks deeply about how her young children, many of them from minority backgrounds, learn to read. She believes cueing systems other than phonics (e.g., semantic, syntactic, pragmatic) work best when a child has a strong "book language" background. The question then becomes: If you don't have such background, what must the teacher provide in the classroom? Mary tries to provide the language experiences that support literacy throughout her daily classroom routines. For example, during sharing time she has decided to emphasize the use of "formal" language to help build a base for the type of "book language" the children will encounter as they begin to read. The language of books is important to provide for her children. Many don't come to school with background knowledge and experience in book language, book experiences, and the processes that go along with being read to. She builds these understandings and spotlights comprehension later on in the year when she focuses on retelling: "This all says to kids, it matters what you think about this book."

Construction of Meaning

A focus on meaning is an important element of her teaching philosophy: "I think human minds want meaning. The children show this with their comments, such as 'I got it!' or 'I can read this!'" Yet, it's a continuing challenge to provide just the right mix of all of the elements of instruction. One of her goals for next year is to be sure there is a balance between reading for meaning and word study. Mary is committed to getting all of it in, and putting reading and writing skills into practice in ways that best meet the needs of her students. As she works with the children, their responses cue her to what they need. She knows it is difficult for beginning readers to juggle the demands of decoding and of constructing meaning, but she encourages them to keep the focus on meaning. When she is working with children in small groups, she works mostly on comprehension and responding to text.

Understandings of Print

Mary believes strongly that beginning readers have different needs from those who are fluent readers. "It is a whole new ballgame for them," she says. She knows their understandings of print are not the same as adults' or fluent readers' in elementary grades. "How does this translate into how a six-year-old learns to read?" is an ever present question for her. Children come to school with many kinds of background knowledge, much of it supportive of learning to read. Still, Mary has seen that some children are better able to focus on more than one thing in learning to read. She decided everyone would receive focused word study instruction in the beginning so all children would have the opportunity to use this knowledge as one of their cueing systems. Having someone, in this case the teacher, show you how to make connections between letters and sounds is one aspect of the social part of learning to read. For this reason, she has chosen a variety of activities to teach the alphabetic principle. She feels the explicit word study has helped this group get into reading a lot faster than past groups.

This first-grade classroom is full of a wide variety of literacy experiences for children. Mary knows it is important to provide opportunities to choose books, evidenced by the pile of books on each child's desk. She also knows it is important to support children where they are in their learning, hence her decision to use Reading Recovery leveled book tubs to move the children through texts they can be successful with at their level.

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Mary incorporates a wide variety of teaching strategies, orchestrating and prompting all aspects of reading. Children need whole-group, small-group, and individual experiences in both reading and writing. Shared reading experiences provide opportunities to experience language and follow demonstrations by the teacher. Small groups of children work with Mary on reading new text. Children work individually and in small groups during writer's workshop, putting to use knowledge and skills they have learned through other activities in the classroom.

She provides writing experiences for the children using concepts and high-frequency words they can use in many curricular areas. She knows it is important to give her students more and more responsibility to use strategies on their own. For example, when they ask her how to spell a word, she says, "Get your dictionary, you spell the first part, and then I'll help." She continues to teach, model, and demonstrate strategies to help her first-graders become fluent readers. Mary believes fluency describes the ability to move along with print, some of which is how many sight words a child has, how automatic his decoding is, whether he predicts automatically, how he attends to syntax and uses meaning and background knowledge. All of that contributes to fluency.

Monitoring Reading Development

Monitoring over time is an important element of Mary's assessment of her students. She has helped all first grades at her school use the same "small" books to assess the development of children as fluent, strategic readers. This year, she has focused more on the role of retelling as it fits in the broad scheme of learning to read. She constantly refines her understanding of the teacher's role and the student's role in making a child a strong first-grade reader. As a teacher, Mary won't presume that kids will "get the basics" on their own, so she does word study experiences with all children. "I know finding meaning, pleasure, and information in a text must be underpinned by automaticity in applying the alphabetic principle," she says.

The clientele at Sabin has changed over the years, from a fairly integrated population to one of a high percentage of African-American, Asian, and Hispanic children. The children come from a wider radius, and Mary understands the increased pressures upon families struggling to keep afloat. She works hard at maintaining positive relationships with parents, and continues to search for ways to support them and their children; as a result, she feels she has good parental support. Her decision to put more emphasis on "word study," as described above, has come from her acknowledgment that many of her children come with fewer formal literacy experiences. It is important for her to provide for many different kinds of literacy experiences in her classroom, and to become the one who can show them how to read and write.

"I guess the bottom line is, are they reading?" she says. "And are they understanding? And do they enjoy it? I know they're not going to get the kind of deep pleasure now they can get out of something as a fluent reader. But they can enjoy reading, and I am finding more kids coming up to me to tell me things they notice about the characters in a book. And those are little cues to me that they're first reading for meaning, and that they're enjoying it."

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CINDY MARTINDALE & JACQUIE WHITMORE

SECOND GRADE

Williwaw School sits amidst newly constructed housing in the eastern section of Anchorage, Alaska. Its open design and colorful playground equipment are welcoming features for visitors and for the more than 600 students it enrolls in grades K-6. The school reflects the growing diversity of culture and language in Anchorage, serving significant numbers of Pacific Islanders, as well as Hispanic and Native Alaskan students. Williwaw qualifies for a schoolwide Title I program, with 75 percent of its population receiving free and reduced lunch. Committed to keeping primary class size at 20 or below, the staff opted to use part of their Title I funding to create two more primary classrooms.

Cindy Martindale has been with her class of second-graders since they entered school as kindergartners, a process called looping. Of the 19 children in her second grade this year, 14 began with her in kindergarten. This is an impressive degree of continuity in a community where economic and family circumstances can lead to several household moves and school transfers in a year. Cindy feels that looping has helped create a stable community; parents find ways to keep their children at Williwaw. She feels the children's literacy growth has benefited from this strong sense of community, too.

Following the observation of Cindy's classroom, we are joined for the interview by Jacquie Whitmore, a Title I Specialist who works in several district schools, including Williwaw.

Learning to Love Literacy, Using Literacy to Learn

On this sunny, windy spring morning, the bell rings, signaling the children to leave the swings and monkey bars and cluster around the door to the school. Cindy welcomes them in, greeting and chatting briefly with each child as she takes a headcount. Once they're all assembled, she leads them down the hall and into the classroom. There, the children put their coats away, check the duty board, and move about the room completing their assigned tasks: some putting papers in students' mailboxes, others taking the chairs off the tables and arranging them for work, still others feeding the fish. On the greenboard at the front of the room the schedule for the start of today reads:

1. lunch graph
2. job
3. read quietly

Wires crisscross the ceiling, hung with the students' colorful artwork. The room is full of invitations to literacy: a word wall with frequently used words from students' writing, below which are stored the students' reading and writing folders; shelves with mailboxes for communication among students and from teacher to student; a collection of poetry notebooks; and books in impressive quantities—arranged near the rabbit cage, in the science center, on shelves, in book bins, on a carousel. A special display of Eric Carle books sits on a bookcase under a bulletin board with information about the author.

Construction of Meaning

Cindy admits that books are her passion. "I believe that you have to love books, and from the love of books you want to know more," she says. "And so, it's the love of the story and the love of the book that draws children into wanting to learn. It's learning about favorites and developing a rapport with an author or with a character that brings children back to books. Sometimes we just go around the circle and say what book we're reading, just to remind everybody that everyone should be in the middle of something or at the start of something. It starts with the books themselves. That's what pulls you in."

Cindy works hard to help children connect to books and make connections among books. "Whether you do it at home before you come to school or you do it at school, having that shared background of stories is really important, stories that you can dialogue about."

One boy settles down on a couch with a book, and three girls share a book the class has composed. But most of the children are gathered around the rabbit cage on the floor not far from the door. The class rabbit had five babies four weeks ago. A chart compiled and updated by the children hangs above the cage: Name, weight, and physical characteristics are listed for each bunny. Cindy has promised that today the children can take them out of the cage and hold them. The excitement is palpable!

Reading & Writing

Now, she instructs everyone with a baby rabbit to sit down on the floor. A few continue to read on their own or with a partner, but most of the children form small groups of two to four around each bunny. Cindy invites the children to take observational notes and ask questions in their journals about the baby rabbits. Two girls sit with their legs open, feet touching, to make an enclosure for their rabbit. As he explores the floor and attempts to climb over their legs, they make notes about his behavior and talk about what they are seeing. *He can hop! He's fast. He wants to get out. Look at his nose wiggle!* Several children select one of the books about rabbits located in a bin next to the cage. They flip through the pages for information and compare their bunny with the ones pictured in the book. A boy brings his journal to Cindy and reads from it: "I am wondering how old they get. A bunny is heavier than my book." Cindy compliments him on this original and useful comparison.

After about 15 minutes of observation, the bunnies are carefully, if reluctantly, returned to the cage. Mother and babies seem happy to be reunited. Now Cindy gathers the students on the rug and shifts their attention to ongoing reading and writing activities. The group reviews various literacy tasks they should be completing, as Cindy writes the items on a white board:

- finish responses to reading, and other tasks
- write in journals
- time to pick a new book

Engagement

There is some discussion of how to pick a book that's right for them. "If it's too hard, but you really want to read it, it's okay." Edward agrees, telling the class that his book about Michael Jordan is hard, but that he's really interested in it and is now on chapter two!

She tells them to check the "to-do list" on the word wall if they need something else to do. The list reminds the children of literacy activities they should be completing and end-of-the-year clean up tasks as well:

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- 10 responses to books
- portfolios
- poetry notebooks
- clean cozy (colorful fabric packs on the back of each chair, for personal storage of books and writing supplies)
- clean cubby
- reading/writing folders

Children move to their places at the tables (four to a table) and begin work. Many are writing in their journals, describing an experience, planning for an upcoming event, creating an original story. Cindy moves among them, helping one student settle on a topic, providing punctuation help to another, and assisting a third with spelling. A student who plans to share his journal entry needs to be reminded to add detail about what made the event he's describing fun, so the other children will understand when he reads his journal entry aloud during sharing time. The children have been keeping journals since kindergarten, so by now they have a full collection with ample evidence of their growth as readers and writers.

Monitoring: Assessment to Inform Instruction

For both reading and writing, Cindy thinks it's vitally important to know what each child can do and what skill or learning they're ready for next. She starts this process at the very beginning of the year. "I see the first couple of weeks as really focusing on getting to know the kids as individuals, [finding out] what they can do as readers and writers," she says. "I think of that first amount of time as building community." She smiles. "Sometimes, I'm building community and other people are doing the alphabet. I just know that when we're ready, it will happen, that if we get this community built, we'll be able to do everything better." Getting to know the children, helping them form relationships and learn to work with each other is basic to literacy instruction.

Ongoing work with individual children helps the teacher monitor their progress. Jacquie notes, "I think it's imperative that teachers know their kids and who they are as readers and writers, and figure out what strengths the students bring to a situation and build on that. You do that by interacting with kids, usually in a variety of contexts—whole group, small group, individually. But at some point, there needs to be some real one-on-one interaction in order to determine exactly where that kid is as a reader and writer. And it involves having to listen to that kid read."

Jacquie uses miscue analysis as a vital tool for monitoring students' reading development and making instructional decisions. Of teachers who've learned how to use miscue analysis, she says, "Once they see how valuable that information is, they start to use it more, because you never listen to kids read the same once you have that knowledge." Cindy values how a related tool, running record, and other classroom-based reading assessments allow her to see what strategies a child is using (and possibly under- or overusing). She regularly monitors her students' reading fluency, accuracy, comprehension, and reflection on what they're reading. She uses her insights from such ongoing informal assessment to support the child in developing as a reader.

Monitoring Reading Development

She also relies on the information she gets from the students themselves about the kinds of help they need. "I put no parameters on what you can say you need help in," she says. "A child who couldn't get along with kids, instead of saying, 'I need help with writing or I need help with numbers,' would say, 'I need help making friends.' And so many times, they were *right* on target, really aware of where they needed help."

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Because she's been with most of her students for three years, she has a wealth of evidence of their literacy learning—student-authored books, running records of oral reading, journals, responses to books, to name a few. "I'm really fortunate in the loop," Cindy notes, "to have the ongoing work, and the history with the parent. We have the same history in terms of what we've experienced with the children. We can talk about our collective memory as a class." In parent conferences, as students read aloud to their parents, Cindy refreshes this collective memory, pointing to evidence of growth since last quarter, last year, two years ago. Students participate actively in these conferences, selecting pieces to share to show their progress as readers and writers. Parents are brought into the classroom community from the very beginning.

A Stable Learning Community

Opportunity to Read

As the children complete today's journal entry, they read independently or with a friend. Popular choices are books written by the students themselves, such as *The Giant Moth* and *Godzilla.* Three boys take turns reading from a book written by the whole class, *Thundercake,* describing the step-by-step process they used to make a cake. The boys take turns reading each page aloud, identifying the author of each. "I measured the sugar. I used a cup," reads one boy. "Andy wrote that," says the other. The book concludes with the complete recipe, which they also read aloud.

After an hour of journal writing and independent reading, Cindy calls the children to the rug again, this time for volunteers to share journal entries and for the others to listen and respond. She reminds them of the sharing rules:

- polite listening
- your own writing on the floor until it's your turn
- your own writing in the middle of the circle after you've shared it

Nine of the children choose to share today: among them, Ted, with his bunny observation notes; Mark, from an original joke book *(Why can't Batman go fishing? Cause Robin ate all the worms.);* Joseph, an original version of *More Scary Stories;* Isabel, about today's classroom visitor; and Sally, a story titled, "I Learned My Lesson at the Hospital." After three children share, the others can ask questions or make comments. There are questions for more information and comments on what they liked in the writing. Sally had used a lot of dialogue in her story, and a student commented that she liked "all the times people said things."

Cindy later explains that Sally had come to this class in second grade as a nonreader and nonwriter. "She's a shining example of what happens when you focus in on each child individually," she says. "That's a person who couldn't read, and couldn't write, and now, she is a reader and a writer. Great, great—just amazing!"

Strategies in Context

Sharing takes approximately 30 minutes. At this point, a resource teacher comes into the room and begins to work with five children, using a big book version of *Max's Sandwich* to model reading strategies. Today she reads the book aloud, eliciting predictions as she goes, involving students in making sense of the story before she focuses on a skill these five need—applying what they know about vowel sounds to figure out new words in the text. After this guided reading with the big book, she passes out individual copies of the story, and listens as the children read the book to themselves softly.

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Cindy explains this approach as a strength of whole language. "Whole language is just about the order. It is all the same pieces, but you start with the whole; you start with the story, and work your way down to the letter. And everybody can start with a story, no matter where they are. And so everybody is included from the beginning. When you teach with just the letters first, there are several children who aren't ready. And particularly in our kinds of schools, we're doing a lot of introducing kids to stories. They haven't had the opportunity to be read to. A lot of their parents are working odd hours, don't have that time, or don't have the books, and some of them read in a different language themselves. So, especially in the beginning years, we're spending a lot of time just building up that wealth of story knowledge that is a take-off place."

It's important, Cindy feels, to move children into written language from understandings about, and enjoyment of, oral language. She cites Bill Martin, Jr. as a strong early influence on her teaching philosophy. His series, *Sounds of Language*, "pulled children into learning, literacy, reading, loving words … [the books] showed just what words can do. They're not just a few letters put together. There's so much more involved in making them appealing." And Jacquie's graduate studies with Ken and Yetta Goodman at the University of Arizona reinforced and added to her growing understanding that "reading is very socially and culturally bound. Oral language is the basis of it; everything builds from there, and we bring who we are to the reading situation. Who we are influences how we read things, not just literally." She describes experiences with children who had difficulty attending to a story because of language or cultural issues; when she found something more culturally appropriate for them, they became involved. Remembering one such student, she says, "When you got something that was really important to him, that he could internalize, then that got his attention."

Phonemic Awareness & Phonics Knowledge

At Williwaw, the variety of ethnic and cultural experience is a big plus for literacy. Artists and speakers from various cultures are featured regularly. Cindy notes that "Helping kids learn to respect their own culture spreads to respecting cultures in general, and seeing that although we have very diverse ways, we have so many similarities." The rich diversity of cultures in her class—Samoan, Hawaiian, Filipino, Native Alaskan, African American, European American—prompts her to represent that diversity throughout the books, pictures, and music she brings into the class. "It makes what we do real. It's harder in a setting without diversity."

Background Knowledge & Prior Experience

There is a good bit of movement in Cindy's classroom, as the children pair up for an activity, work in a small group, settle into a quiet space to work alone, and regularly join Cindy as a whole class on the rug. In addition to the resource teacher, other adults come into the room to work with children. Today the Indian Education teacher works at a table with one boy. Cindy explains that student groupings in her class are always flexible, sometimes determined by her and/or the resource teacher, and sometimes students' choice. Today Sally opted to join the small group for the guided reading lesson on *Max's Sandwich*, and she was welcomed in.

Social Interaction

Cindy works with the rest of the students on finishing their work for the year. Some work to complete their poetry notebooks. The children have been compiling a poetry notebook since kindergarten, and the collection of class poems, favorite published ones and original poems, is impressive. Mary, who has finished hers, works with two boys, helping them to organize the contents of theirs. "There are some kids who are really good at certain things, and the other kids look to them for help," says Cindy, noting another strength of a close classroom community formed over time.

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Four students accept Cindy's invitation to take part in "making words," an activity based on Patricia Cunningham's book by that title. They sit at a table with Cindy, making words according to her directions. Each student receives seven cards, each containing a letter, so the students all have the same set of seven. Students make as many two-letter words as they can (in, an). Cindy directs them to fold their paper into columns for three-, four-, five-, six-, and seven-letter words. They can work in partners, but need to arrange their own letters and list the words they're making on their own paper. The students compare lists, adding words from each other's. There's some discussion of how to spell "weigh" and some explanation of word meanings. These students are becoming fluent readers, working now on advanced understandings of word structure and spelling.

Learning From the Company We Keep

Cindy and Jacquie see many parallels between students and teachers as learners. In the same way that students need to feel known and accepted in a classroom community, teachers need opportunities to work with and learn from each other. Jacquie is reminded of a quote from literacy expert, Frank Smith, "We learn from the company we keep." As a Title I specialist she has learned much from working with teachers in several schools, and she's convinced that the best professional development results from giving teachers time to be together and talk. School-structured teams at grade level and spanning K-2 give teachers like Cindy opportunities to grow professionally. Also, she notes that the decision to include resource teachers and other specialists in the classrooms means that the classrooms feel like more open communities. "You go into someone else's classroom with the idea that you're going to learn something and maybe share something," she says. "It's not a threat."

In Cindy's classroom, the same value of learning from others is clear in the open, eager way children pair up to share a book or work on a piece of writing. There's an acceptance that individuals vary in skill and confidence across a range of learning tasks. Cindy's own experience looping has given her first-hand experience of the insight early childhood educator Lillian Katz shared: You may be on step nine of one thing, but at the entry level on something else. Like the children, Cindy says, teachers can be experiencing entry-level learning in some areas. Each year as she's moved up with her students, she's had new curriculum to learn. "But the carryover's incredible," she says, "and I'll be a much better teacher going back."

Jacquie sums up her philosophy of professional development in a school community like Williwa: "You meet teachers where they are, starting with their strengths. And then you build and help them reflect about their goals and how you can support them. But what they need comes from them. Cindy talked about getting her kids to reflect about that, helping them think about what they need support with." Cindy agrees and takes the parallel further. "I think teachers need to remember what it's like to be learners," she says. "If you're not a learner yourself, I don't think you can be as effective with the kids."

Resources

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MARTY PELLMAN & ELVA CERDA

THIRD GRADE & SECOND GRADE

Valuing Language

Government Hill Elementary School, located near the Elmendorf Air Force Base in Anchorage, Alaska, enrolls 450 students in grades K-6. It receives both Title I and Title VII funds, the latter to provide bilingual/ESL support. Over 60 percent of the students are minorities. Ten percent are African-American, and there are growing numbers of Tongan, Eskimo, Thai, Cambodian, and Korean students as well. But the largest and fastest growing group is Hispanic students. Currently they account for 36 percent of the school's enrollment.

Government Hill is a natural site for language immersion. It is one of three elementary schools in the district offering such a program; one other offers Spanish and a third offers Japanese. The district is committed to language immersion instruction through 12th grade. Currently the Spanish program operates through sixth grade in the participating elementary schools. Government Hill's program is unique in that it is a two-way Spanish/English immersion program with a sizeable number of native Spanish-speaking students. Students in the program spend half the day learning in Spanish and half learning in English. The goal is not to use Spanish as a transitional language for native Spanish-speaking students while they learn English, but to foster language and literacy development in both English and Spanish regardless of the student's first language. Both languages are equally valued.

Nearly half of the school population has opted to participate in the Spanish/English immersion program. Of that group, 10-15 percent of the students are native Spanish speakers; the others are English speakers who take advantage of this optional program available to all children in the school district. The latter group tends to be from more middle class, professional families who live outside of the attendance area.

The staffing pattern reflects the school's commitment to bilingual immersion. All but one of the seven Spanish-speaking teachers are native speakers, Latinas from Texas, Mexico, Venezuela, and Ecuador. Third-grade teacher Marty Pellman, a Latina of Mexican-American heritage, was born in El Paso, Texas, but grew up and went to school across the border in Mexico. Her mother wanted her to learn Spanish in a culture that valued it as a first language. Marty feels it's important for the children to see her and the other Spanish-speaking teachers as role models who are proud of their own language.

Equally important is that the children see the teachers moving easily between the two languages. Elva Cerda, a Spanish immersion resource teacher, currently works with second-graders and is tracking their progress in reading in both languages. She works on both sides of the immersion program, instructing the same students in both Spanish and English. "In the beginning," she says, "it was very confusing for them because they associated me with Spanish. Now they say, 'Wow, you speak two languages.' And in whatever language I'm using in the classroom at that moment, I say, 'And so do you!'" When bilingual teachers confirm that the students are becoming bilingual and biliterate, the students develop a sense of identity and pride.

Building on Student Abilities, Meeting Student Needs

It's October in Anchorage, and this morning on the school playground signs of winter's approach are evident. The children practice sliding on newly frozen puddles and the teachers note the appearance of "termination dust" (the descending pattern of snow on the surrounding Chugach Mountain range that signals the advent of winter).

At 8:55 Marty Pellman leads her 20 third-graders into school and down the hall to her room, where they pause to hang up coats and hats before taking their places at tables arranged for five or six. At first glance, the room appears like any American elementary classroom: colorful charts and pictures, written reminders of tasks and procedures for work, shelves of books and centers with writing supplies. But there's something different here—the larger than life poster of Chicago Bulls star Michael Jordan, poised for a jump shot, is titled *El Cuerpo.* Typed labels are linked by lines to show on the poster *la ceja, la frente, la mano, el pulgar, la pierna, el pie* and many more. Along the wall past the coatroom area are topical charts illustrating more Spanish vocabulary: *las frutas, las verduras, medios de transporte,* and *los vestidos,* to name a few.

Marty's students spend the morning with her, studying mathematics, science, language arts and health—all in Spanish. In the afternoon, the students move to Lauri Peters' third-grade classroom across the hall for lessons in social studies and language arts taught in English. Lauri also provides English support in mathematics, especially as needed in story problems. In all of the bilingual immersion classes, this midday shift, either from English to Spanish or Spanish to English, takes place with a minimum of fuss.

Opportunity to Read

The staff works hard to make the transition seamless and to create routines that tie the two language groups together. For example, in the third grade, Marty and Lauri send home a weekly newsletter in both languages with information on themes under study. For October, the Spanish observation of the Day of the Dead is paired with traditional American Halloween. There is also news of upcoming events such as field trips, and a reminder for the children to read 15 minutes per night in each language. In cases where the adult in the home cannot provide such reading support, the children read with volunteer adult supervision either before or after school in a program called Print Connection.

The school's tape-assisted reading program (TARP) is an important resource for children learning to read who lack books or literacy support at home. TARP supports Marty's philosophy. "All children can learn—at a different rate, but they will show progress," she says. "What's important is that we expose them constantly to books." In addition to materials and shared reading experience, the print connection provides tutorial support to students who need extra assistance in reading.

Rich Literate Environments

Marty is convinced that language and literacy support at home—parents talking with children, reading to them, drawing them into talking about books—benefits students across languages. Marty and her colleagues in the bilingual immersion program design language and literacy experiences based on this premise. "I had the support and language development, in Spanish, at home," she says. "I have seen English speakers who have had language development at home. They have support and are exposed to literacy at home before they even come to school. I've seen how they flourish in their second language—not only the primary, but the second. And I've seen a child who's not having that language and literacy support at home, and that child struggles in reading, even though he already knows the language in which he's learning to read." Rich experiences in one language benefit development in another. Language is language.

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Where necessary, Marty and her colleagues compensate for limitations in home support. They see ample evidence of the reciprocal relationship of dual language study: children grow as English speakers and readers because of their work in Spanish and vice versa. For this reason, Elva notes, they would like to see Spanish/English Head Start added to their program and are exploring possible support through Title VII funds.

This morning Marty greets the children individually in Spanish, and circulates to check their homework as they settle in. Still in Spanish, she reminds students about the need to bring in money for the upcoming field trip to see a local production of *Little Women* and asks how many plan to attend. Most of the students raise their hands.

The children practice their handwriting in Spanish. At 9:05 the children stand for the Pledge of Allegiance, signaled by the intercom. They recite it in Spanish as the voice on the intercom says it in English. For those who haven't yet memorized it, the pledge in Spanish is posted on the wall below the American flag.

At the start of language arts time, Marty conducts a status of the class check in: students report their current writing project. Above her on the wall is a bulletin board that depicts the relationship of reading, writing, and oral language in this classroom. The sun's rays, labeled *lectura guiada de la clase de tercer ano* (guided reading in third grade), bathe a flower in a pot named *lenguaje oral* (oral language). In the center of the flower is *escritores y lectores*, with petals around it for the various ways of reading *(lectura en voz alta, lectura compartida, lectura guiada, lectura independiente)* and of writing *(escritura en voz alta, compartida, guiada e independiente)*. In this classroom, these are the components of a balanced literacy program: teacher-modeled, shared, guided, and independent reading and writing.

Models & Demonstrations

This morning, Marty enlists the children in a review of the types of writing people do. The children talk in their small groups first. In Marty's class, opportunities to work in small groups are frequent. She says, "I've seen the philosophy that children learn in a social context in action. They've made a believer out of me, because I've seen the results. I've watched children try to negotiate meaning as they talk to each other. They have their own language, and they know how they think. As an adult, I struggle, trying to think 'How would the children view this?' But for the children, it's easier to make meaning when they talk to each other."

Social Interaction

Another important aspect of small group work is production of the target language. It's important for children to move from taking in and understanding the target language, to actually using it in their own speech and writing. As Elva Cerda reads aloud to a small group of second-graders from a book about butterflies, *La Mariposa Hermosa*, she nudges them to respond in Spanish and compliments them when they do. And in Marty's class, she not only sets up small groups to foster speaking in Spanish, but she rewards students with small blue slips that read *Te vi hablando espanol* (I saw you speaking Spanish). Each blue slip is worth five coupons eligible for prizes in a drawing held each Friday. Students forfeit coupons, though, if Marty hears them speaking English during the morning. This occurs for one student today, and as Marty points out, he can re-earn the coupon with some Spanish production. Obviously, the more coupons a student deposits in the drawing box, the better the chance of winning. Marty likes the incentive this provides to speak Spanish.

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Engagement

As her third-graders develop more vocabulary and become more independent readers of Spanish, Marty introduces literature study into the class. "By third grade, like after December, we'll start into chapter books and into questions like 'What is the author saying? How can I relate this to my life?'" she explains. "But this is a gradual thing. That's why I start them with stories." With literature study, the students will read extended text and engage in more substantive discussions.

Today, the children discuss types of writing, building on each other's ideas for about 10 minutes. Then Marty asks each *capitan del grupo* to report on the results of the discussion. One by one she lists their ideas on the white board, noting when a form of writing has been identified by more than one group:

- *instrucciones* (instructions)
- *poema* (poems)
- *tarea* (homework)
- *libros* (books)
- *mapas y leyenda* (maps and charts)
- *manuscrita* (letters)
- *diarios* (diaries)
- *canciónes* (songs)

Models & Demonstrations

She asks students who might be the audiences of these types of writing, and illustrates with quickly drawn stick figures the range of possibilities from the self *(diarios)* to wider, more public audiences *(libro, manuscrita)*. Marty wants to help the children understand that writing in all its forms is communication. She'd noticed that some of their original stories seemed to be exercises in using vocabulary rather than really telling a story to a reader. As she summarizes their discussion now, she notes that what many of the types of writing they've listed have in common is that they are *para otras personas*. She says, "Todo es para comunicarse." They are all for communication. So at the top of the list she writes, *Escritura de comunicación*. Since *"Nosotros escribimos para comunicarnos,"* she reminds them, it's important to be as clear and engaging in their writing as they can.

Phonemic Awareness & Phonics Knowledge

Following this discussion, the students move into *grupos de lectura*, where they will work on reading and writing projects. One group works on vocabulary introduced in a recent story. Another group works with a bilingual teacher's aide, completing an original story, *¿Qué quieres en tu pizza?* following their shared reading of the Spanish version of the book What Do You Want in Your Sandwich? The students in this group are emergent readers in Spanish; working to generate ideas and words for their group story helps them develop vocabulary and phonics knowledge applicable to both Spanish and English.

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Distinguishing Between Language and Reading Issues

Marty and Elva stress that there are differences between the students' language needs and their reading needs. Elva notes the importance of selecting reading material at the right level in the second language. "I have second-grade students who are reading at fourth-grade levels in English, but when they come to me in Spanish, they are nowhere near that level because of comprehension in the second language," she says. "You have to be careful, because they are fluent, that is they can pronounce the words, but they don't have the comprehension." Teachers also need to take care not to identify as a reading problem, or even learning disability, what is really a language problem. Elva says, "I have students in second grade reading in Spanish at mid-first grade level, but when they come to English, they're at kindergarten. They would appear to be special education students, but they're not. But with regard to special education students who are bilingual, working in a bilingual immersion program gives them credit. It allows them to use the first language, and they're going to make more gains. Were I to have to teach them only in English, I wouldn't be getting those results. So, for these students in second grade, they might be at first-grade level in Spanish, their first language, because I'm allowed to use their first language. That might not seem like a lot, but for special ed students it is."

For students who already read in their first language, the discrepancy between reading ability in that and in the second language is typically a language issue, not a reading issue. At Government Hill, the indepth information on students from Elva and the other bilingual resource teachers is a critical component of the immersion program. School study teams regularly rely on that expertise in making instructional recommendations for students.

For her third-graders working in Spanish as their second language, Marty says, "We try to push them a little bit, like writing, creating their own books so they're using the new vocabulary. We're trying to push them to develop that vocabulary so they're exposed to more language and they're able to read different books."

Today, another group of students, fairly advanced in their Spanish, share original stories they've written, using elements similar to those in *Tres Cabras Gruñonas*, the Spanish translation of *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, which they'd read in their Spanish/English basal anthology. Marty directs them to give each other feedback on whether their stories make sense, contain the elements of fiction they've been studying (plot, character, setting, theme, and conflict), use proper nouns appropriately, and (following the story's format) use animals as characters who overcome some problem. For these students also, Marty feels that original writing based on a story they've read and discussed is very effective for increasing both vocabulary and language fluency. "Everything we're doing is based on the need of the student," she says. "We start from where the student is located in literacy, and then we set our goals, based on what I want this child to do by the end of this quarter. Then we focus on the materials that will be needed to take that child to that approximation."

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Keeping Track of Progress, Matching Instruction to the Child

Teachers rely on contextualized reading assessments, such as observation of reading strategies in guided reading sessions, running records, and miscue analysis to provide accurate information on a child's reading strengths and strategies. They conduct ongoing diagnostic assessment in reading in order to determine each child's reading level and instructional needs, and provide a baseline from which to measure each child's growth.

Monitoring Reading Development

For a special assessment study with strong instructional implications, Elva has been taking reading miscue inventories on all of the current second-grade students, using leveled books that accompany the bilingual basal anthology the school has adopted. She has been able to monitor these students in both Spanish and English reading since the beginning of first grade, and the results have been quite enlightening. A typical example is one second-grader, a native Spanish speaker, who is reading benchmark books in Spanish at the fourth-grade level, but only at the kindergarten level in English. Numerous examples show the obverse situation for native English speakers.

While the disparity in reading ability based on first language is not surprising, Elva's conclusions about instruction from the assessment data certainly run counter to "English only" proposals for reading instruction. She asserts that, especially at the primary grades, the student's progress and success in reading, even in the second language, is dependent on the amount of practice the child gets in the first language, and especially on receiving instruction at the appropriate level in that language. With these two factors in place, she is seeing progress in both English and Spanish reading. Discrepancies in reading performance between the languages level off at the upper grades. Such data leads Elva to conclude that reading automatically transfers into the other language.

This constant tracking of students' reading development provides a record of progress and helps teachers select appropriate materials for students in both languages. Results are recorded on a class chart, so the teacher can see the reading picture of the entire class and note progress as it occurs for individual students. To assist teachers in matching materials to students' reading ability, the school's collection of books for emergent and beginning readers has been organized by levels. The collection of data has been invaluable to the teachers for making instructional decisions. It has also helped tremendously to explain to parents the particulars of their children's reading growth in both languages.

This year, the immersion teachers are learning how to use the developmental reading continuum of First Steps™, professional development courses and materials in literacy. They hope to increase their skill in matching language and literacy experiences and materials to the child's needs, the goal being to recognize the child's current level of functioning and to nudge them along, constantly increasing their performance. First Steps™ is just one of many professional development experiences in language and literacy that assist Government Hill teachers in this task. Laurel Derksen, a resource teacher in the immersion program, describes how a large portion of the Title VII grant for bilingual education is for professional development. "The entire staff, not just the immersion teachers, will be trained in dealing with children who come from language minority backgrounds," she says. "They'll learn what strategies they can use with those kids to 'bump them up' … how to make the language input comprehensible and how to find a level that's just above where the students are and keep pushing them."

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Key staff development resources, in person or via published works, have included Stephen Krashen, Virginia Collier, Rosa Molina, Helena Curtain, Marie Clay, and Margaret Mooney. The district is committed to developing independent reading ability among third-graders and has provided resources for hiring reading specialists and conducting professional development in language and literacy. In summer 1998, all first-grade teachers participated in a weeklong institute on reading that addressed assessment, leveling books, instructional strategies, and a number of other topics. Inclusion of principals in the training was especially well received. Elva describes one goal of the training as developing a common language about reading. This year, kindergarten, second-, and third-grade teachers will be added.

A focus on consistent, theoretically congruent professional development underscores the critical importance of knowledgeable teachers to students' reading success. Teachers need to know how to assess the child's current abilities, and match instruction and materials to the point of need. And while the goal of independent reading by third grade is a challenge for some, Elva says of the second-graders she's tracking, "You can see by the chart that everybody is making gains. Some are by leaps and bounds and some are slower, but everybody's moving."

Growth in Learning, Growth in Language

Qualified support personnel are essential in the bilingual/immersion program. Bilingual teachers' aides assist kindergarten teachers with a variety of mostly nonacademic tasks. In grades one through six, international tutors work on academics with individuals and small groups of students. The international tutors are bilingual and biliterate and have at least two years of college education. In addition, the presence of bilingual special education resource teachers and Title I specialists strengthens individual and small group assistance.

Native Spanish-speaking students are another source of support in the class. Marty is careful to disperse these "model speakers" across various workgroups in the classroom. With the recent arrival of Diego from Mexico, Marty now has seven model speakers, whose expertise and fluency provide important support to the other students. Marty describes a common dilemma in which an English-speaking student says, "I need to speak Spanish, but I don't know how to say this. I need to go ask a model speaker that."

For the model speakers, an important benefit of the two-way immersion program is the opportunity to learn academic content in their first language. The Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) are the first ones acquired in a second language. This is language that's functional on the playground, with friends or with adults, such as, What is your name? May I go to the bathroom? or How do you say ____? BICS are acquired mostly through hearing the language. In Marty's example, the native English-speaking student was exhibiting BICS when he was able to ask a Latino student "*¿Como se dice* ____?" It may take one or two years to acquire BICS sufficient to operate in a second language environment.

Construction of Meaning

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency Skills (CALPS), however, are a different story. They may take from five to seven years to acquire. CALPS are intensely related to learning through reading and writing; they are essential for learning academic concepts in a second language. If BICS are the language of the playground and the neighborhood, CALPS are the language of the classroom, typified by such teacher questions as, What is the author telling you here? Why do you think there are drops of water outside the glass? or How can you develop this paragraph further? At Government Hill, students like Diego do not lose academic growth because their second language skills are not as advanced as their cognitive ability. They work to acquire CALPS in English but continue to learn important subject area content in Spanish.

Opportunity to Read

Resources in Marty's room are designed to provide students with accessible Spanish language experiences. Tubs with little books in Spanish occupy a colorfully decorated corner. The books are popular Wright Group and Sunshine Group beginning reader titles, translated into Spanish. Elva and Marty note that they can't assume that a book written in English, once translated into Spanish, is at the same level. For this reason, they prefer to use texts—at all levels of difficulty—originally written in Spanish. They still use translations, but they level them carefully. Marty has leveled her books, so students can find a good match for their current reading ability. Elsewhere in the room are more challenging books. Marty has taught the children how to choose appropriate books, easier ones for independent reading and more challenging ones for small group reading. She provides lots of opportunities for students to pursue reading and writing tasks in self-chosen groups where reading, writing, speaking, and listening will support and enhance each other.

In the afternoon, Marty and Lauri switch classes. It's noteworthy that the "model speakers" from the morning class are on the receiving end of support from their English-speaking peers in the afternoon. Diego, for example, reads more slowly as he takes a turn with *Abuelo and the Three Bears*, and receives more help with vocabulary. He smiles broadly as he encounters the words *frijoles*, *osito*, and *tortillas* in the text, then furrows his brow in confusion at the word *cozy*. Students and teacher hug themselves and smile, one rubs the sleeve of a velour jacket to illustrate the meaning of the word for him. One of those offering the help is James, a fluent reader in English who had been working with the bilingual aide on the pizza story in Spanish during the morning.

Examples abound of students giving and receiving language expertise; everyone gets to shine and everyone is learning. This dual immersion in Spanish and English results in lots of oral and written language experience and two-way vocabulary development, big factors, Marty and Lauri feel, in the strong test scores their students achieve. Last year's immersion third-graders had the highest California Achievement Test (CAT 5) scores in the school, with average percentile scores in reading, language, and mathematics in the 80s.

Marty has previous experience teaching in a bilingual transition program, where Spanish is used as a temporary bridge into English fluency. Now she is convinced of the superior benefits of this two-way immersion program, in which both languages continue to develop, so children can use both to learn.

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JOANNE JOHNSON

FOURTH/FIFTH GRADE

Riverbend Elementary School sits on the outskirts of Springfield, Oregon. The newest K-5 school in the district, Riverbend opened in fall 1997 to significant challenges. Its site, a park known for high crime, was chosen jointly by the district and the city to promote a positive new outlook for the neighborhood. In addition, the new school's enrollment area drew children from five different schools. As a result, the staff at Riverbend have worked hard to establish a sense of community. This elementary school was designed to be state of the art: Technology was provided throughout the school for students and teachers; the design provided a variety of learning opportunities for all; and spaces were defined to intentionally include parents in the daily life of the school.

For its first year, the total school population was just over 600 students. Sixty percent of the children qualify for free or reduced lunch. In fall 1998 the school moved to a schoolwide Title I format. The population is predominately white with only a few African-American and Hispanic students.

Setting Priorities for Student Learning

At the beginning of the year, the students in Mrs. J's (Joanne's) fourth- and fifth-grade room had little interest in books and reading, so she began the year by talking about literature. She read aloud her favorites, choosing books she knew her students could relate to as she became familiar with their backgrounds and interests. They began to talk about books they liked, and compared and contrasted books they had read together. More formal literature groups began in spring, after foundational skills and knowledge were in place. Joanne knew she needed to model what readers do—what they think, how they talk, how they relate to books—as a cornerstone to building a literate classroom community. The priority for this school was to establish a community that would provide students good models and demonstrations, and also set high expectations for them as readers and writers.

Models & Demonstrations

The classroom desks are in groups of four to six, arranged to form tables. Each table has a basket in the middle, holding each student's journal and a variety of other items including pencils and the room rules bound in notebooks entitled "Procedures and Other Documents." Responses to literature are everywhere around the room. One wall sports Venn diagrams comparing the two Caldecott-nominated books, *The Gardener* and *Rapunzel*, asking: "Which one do you think won the award?" Scattered around the perimeter of the walls are quotations the students have chosen from their own reading, quotation books, the library, and a variety of other resources to present each week. In other areas of the room, reminders of strategies are posted: Traits of writing and suggestions for word usage offer assistance in composition; examples of semantic/mind maps (daily agenda and the emerging water theme) are prominent. The work of the students in the room is evident in many of the displays, acknowledging their important role in the classroom community.

Rich Literate Environments

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The 29 students come in from lunch and recess at noon. Joanne greets them, asks them to focus by finding their journals, the novel they are reading, and a pencil. On the board, the tasks for this reading workshop time are outlined, listed under each title currently being read by three literature study groups:

Adrift
1. Read p. 66-75.
2. Flynn is responsible for Sally. How do you think he feels? Tell about a time when you were responsible.

Windcatcher
1. Read p. 73-83.
2. Draw a map of Long Island Sound. Label the places.

Island of the Blue Dolphins
1. Read p. 80-85.
2. Meet.

Background Knowledge & Prior Experience

These texts have been chosen to fit with the schoolwide theme of water. In addition, Joanne based her choices on the backgrounds of students so they could begin to relate in personal ways, see purposes for reading, and receive multiple demonstrations of particular reading skills and strategies. Many of the books she chose had protagonists with backgrounds similar to those of her students: young people who faced, and survived/overcame, issues and dilemmas, such as homelessness, abuse, frequent moving, absent parents, and foster homes.

Beside the whiteboard are listed the procedures for literature groups and their meeting times:

Literature Group Procedures
1. Do the two jobs.
2. Stay in your assigned seat.
3. Work hard.

Group Meeting Time:
Read from your journal.
Talk about the book.
Read from the book to support about your ideas.
Write or draw in your journal.

The group reviews the jobs for the afternoon, the rules for the group discussion, and the tasks for those who will remain at their desks while she works with a group. The students offer suggestions for success in completing tasks: *Don't come to group if your work isn't done; Tell how you felt.* Joanne models how to complete a map for the *Windcatcher* assignment, and suggests that this is also a time when they can compare and contrast in their journal responses to the questions posed. One group goes out of the room to work with a specialist; another group of children moves to a table in the corner of the room to discuss *Island of the Blue Dolphins* with Joanne; the others turn to read or work on responses to their book at their seats.

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By 12:05, Joanne has the attention of the Blue Dolphin group. Because their meeting times have been interrupted by testing and vacations over the past few weeks, she reviews a bit by going back to her journal. Joanne, too, keeps a journal to model for her students as she reads a book. She asks the kids to join her by reading through their journals as well. She then begins a discussion of the bravery of Karana, one of the characters in the book. "How was she brave?" she asks. "Would it help if I wrote it down?" The group decides that, because they already created a mind map, they could just develop a list from what they read aloud from their journals. One student volunteers to read first. Each of the six students takes a turn, reading from their journal to describe how the character was brave. Their compiled list includes:

Strategies in Context

- She slept where the wild dogs could get her.
- She made weapons.
- She went to the ocean at night in a canoe that was old and leaking in a couple of spots.
- She killed three dogs.

Joanne continues to probe and question throughout: *Why is that a brave thing? Is there anything else we left out? Anything else? I think you did it right.*

They move on: "Now, I want you to do some thinking," she says. "Think about some other characters in other books who were brave. They might not be exactly the same things. You can compare another character to Karana. Write in your journals. It could be any book you've read …" She allows them some thinking time. Then, as she begins to write in her own journal, she reminds them they are to work at filling an entire page in their journal. "I'm going to write in mine, too. Do you have any questions? In a book I'm reading now, the character is brave, I think. You really have to know what brave means, don't you?"

Complex Thinking

Everyone, including Joanne, writes for six or seven minutes. Joanne asks, "How are we doing on time?" and is told by one of the children that five minutes remain.

The writing continues. The rest of the children in the classroom are quietly reading or writing in their journals to complete the tasks listed on the board.

Reading & Writing

After five more minutes, Joanne asks them to tell about their characters. The students have focused on these characters:

Hammer in *The Wall*
Maniac Magee in *Maniac Magee*
Koby in *Stranded*
Brian in *Hatchet*

One child is still thinking, and she appears frustrated. Joanne asks if it helped to hear from her classmates and assures her that she will come up with something. Joanne shares her character, Princess Cimerone, from the book she is reading now, *Dealing with Dragons* by Patricia Wrede. They go on for five more minutes. One child looks back into *Stranded* for some details; there is some discussion among the children on particular details. Joanne continues to write along with them.

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There is always group problem solving. Even if the question is directed to Joanne she refers the question back to the group to work through. As the five minutes nears completion, the child who was stuck begins to write.

"Finish up what you're working on," she says. "Who wants to share?" One child reads aloud his description of Koby in *Stranded* as brave. Joanne asks, "Is that brave? Why? Would you do that, be that brave?" Another child, describing the title character in *Maniac Magee*, needs to finish a sentence. Joanne brings the group into the process, "What are you thinking about?" Two children give him suggestions "Is this something he should add, then?" They continue on, Joanne encouraging responses to each student, "Do you agree?"

Models & Demonstrations

After each child has had a turn, Joanne takes hers as a member of the group. She reads aloud from her journal, asking the group if they think Princess Cimerone is a risk taker. They agree that she is daring to do what she has done. Joanne then shows how she added something, how she changed her writing to clarify what she wanted to say: "Did you see what I did? I compared them."

Before they leave, Joanne asks the child who struggled but is now inspired, to read what she had written so far. She then reminds the group to compare their character to the character in *Island of the Blue Dolphins* if they haven't already. They conclude with a brief discussion of times they have been brave. Many of the stories center around being scared, and Joanne points out how scared and brave are related: "There are different braveries. Sometimes there are different ways of being brave. You did a good discussion today."

Joanne's teaching philosophy is based upon providing good modeling, supportive learning environments, access to other readers, and their knowledge. She has maintained high expectations for these students. These beliefs have guided her priorities for instructional decisionmaking. Her commitment, and that of the staff at Riverbend, is that expectations would not go down for these students in spite of the difficulties—both personal and academic—they arrived with in the fall. Expectations call for everyone to produce quality work; the continuum of expectations both acknowledges where students are and challenges them to progress. As a group working to create a positive school community, the staff questioned what a reasonable expectation is and whether or not it should be modified. How, the staff wondered, do you get the kids there rather than go down to the level they're at now? How do you keep those expectations in place? Staff have worked hard to achieve standards, while acknowledging the beginning skill levels of their students and what they still need to accomplish.

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Building on Student Interests

Construction of Meaning

It became clear, at the beginning of the year, that the background knowledge these students brought to school was not always helpful to them in their academic tasks. Riverbend's principal, Julie DePauw, observed: "I'm repeatedly struck by their lack of background knowledge and experience. Prior knowledge is a handicap for these kids." She continued: "The whole notion is that you have to construct learning. Learning's hard work. It doesn't just get spoon fed and given to you. And I think the ethic of hard work, of having to put effort out, and pull something out of yourself to put something back in is a notion that we fit with these kids. There are many of them who are used to being spoon fed without any sort of self motivation."

Joanne struggled with the fact that the motivation for reading or writing was not apparent in the beginning; Reading and writing didn't mean much to her students. The children didn't look much to the future; they focused instead on the immediate.

Joanne worked hard to come up with strategies for hooking her students into learning. They were very different from previous students. They seemed not connected to or invested in school or learning. She asked herself how to make things real for kids. She turned to thematic units, continually searching for topics that would provide hooks for her students. For example, when the schoolwide theme of water began in the spring, she counted on the kids to lead her. Keiko, the famous orca housed at the Oregon Coast Aquarium in Newport, was in the newspaper at that time, so that was real for them. Some of them had seen Keiko, and even among the others, there was a general interest in the killer whale. It was the first thing she'd seen this group care about: "*They* led the way for me," she says. Joanne took this interest as a starting place, and built knowledge and skills from there.

Engagement

While much of the strategy and skill instruction is done within the whole group, small groups are pulled together for further literature study. The groups are very mixed and are often self-chosen based upon interest in the books Joanne has presented to them. First, Joanne and the class developed some guidelines together to use in choosing books. These include, for example, the five finger rule, which dictates that if a book has more than five difficult words per page, the book is probably too hard. Joanne also guides the class in asking questions about the characters and content of books they're considering. "The children need to ask themselves if it's a book for them or not," she says. "They need to understand the characters, and understand what the author is saying in the book."

Joanne chose five books ranging in interest, content, and difficulty, gave book talks on each, then allowed the students to browse through the books in set periods during the rest of the day. The students' job was to read several pages in each book and choose one. They needed to know not just if they could read it, but if it interested them. After this, each student listed their priorities from one to five on a card, and Joanne assigned groups, trying to give each child their first or second choice.

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Everyone is together for strategic instruction, including children who receive resource Title I assistance. This reinforces the importance of providing models. If they haven't seen anyone reading or writing, then how will they know what to do or why? In the beginning, looking at things as a group was very purposeful. There was a lot of modeling of how one responds to literature, how one *thinks* about reading. Many of these students came to school not wanting to read and not wanting to write. Joanne emphatically noted that this is something they would *never* choose to do on their own. She began at the point where she modeled what someone looks like—what their eyes do, what their body does—as they read.

"I think these kids can decode," Joanne observed. "I felt it was much, much deeper than that. They weren't connected to language, not language in any way we know it. They were not connected at all—words on a page meant nothing to them." Knowing that many of her students had foundational reading skills in place, she focused on teaching them a variety of strategies, placed within many different opportunities for use and connection to real life. "I really equate it to a toolbox," she said. "I have filled my toolbox with many ways and strategies for kids."

Monitoring Reading Development

Assessment is an ongoing, daily aspect of the classroom. Students are held to particular standards, such as traits of writing, which are posted in the room. They are also asked to self-evaluate as their teacher assesses their progress, using their reading journals as part of a conference about their progress.

Joanne has focused on the value of learning to love literature. "I have three kids who have now told me, 'I like to read,'" she says. "They weren't readers before." The kids are gradually developing higher-level thinking about reading as a result of the models and demonstrations found in this classroom.

Becoming a Community of Learners

As the school opened in the fall, the teachers and principal anticipated a variety of issues and problems. With children coming from five different schools across the district, they knew they would be working hard to create a school community. The principal and many of the teachers had worked in schools with students dealing with similarly chaotic home lives. The staff worked hard over the previous year to prepare a curriculum and series of learning experiences that would provide important community-building opportunities. However, all were surprised by the attitude of the children as they arrived the first day of school. During the first weeks of the year the children demonstrated that they had less value for school than anyone had anticipated. Joanne greeted fourth- and fifth-graders who arrived without any sense of how to "do" school.

By spring, however, the sense of community is strong throughout the building. The hallways of Riverbend are filled with the work of its students. Tiles, one created by every student during this inaugural year, line the hallways. Every hallway is named for a river and contains small "communities" of grades kindergarten through five. Each hallway has buddy classes, bringing together the "youngers" and the "olders" in support of individual learning. Social interaction is a priority throughout the school community.

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In Joanne's hallway, several projects are on display. Dr. Seuss' Bartholomew Cubbins has a hat made by each member of the hallway. Joanne's students have created paper quilts, describing the "wall up, wall down" conclusion to *Randall's Wall*. The yellow bathroom scene from the same book is right outside the door to their classroom, with the statement: "Ask any student in room A105 about the bathroom scene in *Randall's Wall* by Carol Fenner." Along another wall near the classroom entrance, illustrations of favorite books are displayed, including *Winnie the Pooh, Wayside School Gets a Little Stranger, Charlotte's Web, Fantastic Mr. Fox, Bunnicula, Captain Underpants, The Wall, Stranded, Crash, Running Out of Time, See You Around Sam,* and *Poppy*.

Rich Literate Environments

It is 1:35 in the afternoon. The fourth- and fifth-graders return from a brief recess break. It is time for them to meet with their first-grade buddies from their hall community. Reading buddies are one way to help the hallways become communities: Each classroom of older kids works with a classroom of younger kids on reading at least once a week.

The kids are ready to go. Joanne reminds them to find a favorite book to read with their buddy. One child asks if he can bring a chapter book to read to his buddy. "You need to know your buddy," she says. "If you know your buddy, you can choose." After several minutes of what seems to be mass chaos—first-graders looking for their older buddies, older buddies looking for first-graders—everyone finds a place to settle in and read. A calm, orderly scene is established in a matter of seconds. The kids can choose between the first-grade classroom across the way, or they can remain in the fourth/fifth-grade classroom; after a few minutes, they appear to be distributed in a comfortable way. Children are reading to each other. First-graders listen intently to the fourth- and fifth-graders reading, and fourth- and fifth-graders help along first-graders, who are just beginning to read.

Social Interaction

As she reflects on the importance of the first-grade buddies for her fourth- and fifth-graders, Joanne observes they are a big motivation for learning how to read properly. "We have these *little* kids who don't know how to read," she says. "And, so, we paired what they were doing in the classroom with *them* taking a teacherlike role, working with the little kids. They began to see what it was like to move from being a student to being a teacher and back again, and developing new skills. It's been interesting to see. They are very articulate in talking about their buddies and about the problems they have, for example, not being able to keep a child focused. Then, someone else in the group will offer a suggestion of what to do. So I see this really paying dividends. The buddies have been critical for these kids and their learning and their growing."

Joanne believes a large part of reading instruction is modeling and scaffolding for kids. She must show them how to use the reading process. She asks them how they think about and approach reading. She also asks what they do if they don't know a word. By working with their buddies, they can apply these questions, and, in their group discussions, begin to articulate those processes that are effective.

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Joanne has to address some very basic aspects of working together as she has developed a community of learners in her classroom. She has provided many opportunities to learn how to be a group together. While at times she is frustrated with what they haven't accomplished, Joanne is very aware she has had to set priorities for this group's learning—both process and content. Without the support of the classroom community, she knows their progress in reading and writing would not be as great. She has focused on taking the students from where they are, knowing it is important to have social skills to learn successfully.

Strategies in Context

The resource room teachers and the librarian are also committed to working with children to build community. The resource room teacher works with her charges in Joanne's room thematically, so they have a similar experience to the other students. They read books from the choices given to the entire class; they have a journal; they read a certain number of pages before each meeting; they have an assigned task, but it's done in the smaller group with the assistance of the resource teacher. The librarian works within the classroom, as well as in the library, to provide essential support to all projects. In fact, the choice of an excellent librarian was a critical first step to ensure the library as the hub of the school, and literacy as the central theme.

Clearly, literacy was not valued by the majority of the children who entered Riverbend in the fall. However, there has been progress and the team of principal, teachers, librarian, resource teachers, students, and parents continue to aim for a high value and expectation for literacy. The lifelong goal for students at Riverbend is for them to use resources in school and beyond to obtain information. To reach this goal, they need a variety of experiences at school, focusing on the process of generating a question, finding answers, and using the knowledge productively. These students are gaining an understanding of how to be a literate person in society.

The beginnings at Riverbend were very difficult. By December, teachers were perhaps more discouraged than hopeful. They approached the winter holiday break, fully expecting to tackle behavioral and academic challenges again when the children returned to school. But then the children came back—*ready* to be at Riverbend. Something about not being able to be there for two weeks made the transition for them. Students came back feeling a strong sense of ownership and belonging. The sense of community, once fostered, continued throughout the spring. In Joanne's classroom, as throughout the rest of Riverbend, students were supported both for who they were and what they knew, and challenged to become the best they could be.

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DONNA MIKKELSON

SIXTH GRADE

Meridian, Idaho is located on the outskirts of Boise. Although considered a "bedroom" community, it is still reminiscent of small-town Idaho. Because of the growth of nearby Treasure Valley—the business and industry section in the surrounding Boise area—Meridian is faced with tremendous growth in its school-aged population. Four new elementary schools were opened in 1997; a new bond measure will be asking for two more elementary schools and one new middle school. Three years ago, a new middle school, a new high school, and two new elementary schools were opened. Meridian Middle School, situated in the middle of town, remains overcrowded, with 1,400-1,500 students and increases expected next year. The district struggles to accommodate the rapid growth rate. The population remains predominately white, middle to lower middle class.

Active Learning to Involve the Whole Child

It is 8:20 on a sunny May morning. Donna Mikkelson's classroom, with only a few windows along the top of one wall, is already warming up—an effect of both the warmth of the day and the nature of her young adolescent charges. Donna has just completed the initial "advisory" period, and has moved on with the sixth graders she team teaches. While literacy is integrated throughout the curriculum by both teachers, Donna's responsibility is a "core" of English, reading, and social studies.

Donna and her team teacher have embraced an inclusion model to accommodate a variety of abilities. Donna has an aide with her for the reading/English block in the morning. Included are ESL students, students with learning disabilities qualifying for Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and "identified competency students"—those without the learning disabilities identification, but who test quite low. There are also nine students who qualify for the district gifted program; six have chosen to participate and so they leave Donna's classroom during second period.

In this classroom, the notion of inclusion is to accommodate students in such a way that when you walk into the classroom, only the very discerning eye can pick out who is the included child or children. Donna and her teammates have found this year to be particularly challenging; 11 of their students are considered emotionally and socially at risk.

Because of the high enrollment, Donna must share her classroom with other teachers during her free period. She finds this makes it a bit more challenging to allow as much display for student work as she would like. Low bookshelves stretch along the back of the room. On the top are displayed books the students have written for the upcoming Author's Night. A classroom library of young adult novels fills some of the shelves. Two bulletin boards are along one wall; one outlines the steps of SQ3R, a content reading strategy, while another gives tips for success in school, such as "Be on time" and "Do your best."

Rich Literate Environments

On the chalktray in front of the room, books dealing with China and dragons are displayed, including: *The Discovery of Dragons* (Graeme Base); *Voices of the Heart* (Ed Young); *Lon Po Po* (Ed Young); *Dragon's Gate* (Laurence Yep); *The Moon Lady* (Amy Tan); and *The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks* (Katherine Paterson, illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon). The novel they are reading is Laurence Yep's *Dragonwings*.

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Today's tasks are outlined on the overhead:

1. Reread pages 35-37 of *Dragonwings*, locating descriptors of the Imperial dragon.
2. Plan and collaboratively draw (and label?) the great dragon.
3. Finish back cover of own book for Author Night.
4. Pass spelling test.

Donna outlines her expectations for the dragon project. Their assignment is to take some excerpts from Yep to describe the dragon; if there are places they think he does this well, they are to share these with the group. Grades will be dependent upon collaborative efforts and thoughtful, kind behaviors within groups. She reminds them of their 100 "noise pollution" points. She and Mrs. Emery, the aide, will be around to take off points for any problems with noise to emphasize the role of collaboration and problemsolving.

Complex Thinking

Donna distributes the *Dragonwings* books. As everyone finds page 34, she begins to read aloud and her students follow along. She asks questions: "What will your dragon need if you want him to fly? You are going to have to read between the lines in order to depict this dragon … don't forget about the setting, think setting as well." A few more suggestions are offered: "You'll want to take a few notes; he's big—five football fields long!"

The students are allowed to choose their own group as long as everyone is included, and they avoid forming groups merely to be with friends.

Donna counts down to five. By the time she gets to three, most students have found a group and have begun to focus on the task. There are, however, two students without a group. Donna asks, "Who can help me problem solve … we have to solve this." The two children are quickly welcomed into other groups. There are now groups of three, and one group of two, formed from the 28 students. They push six desks together to form tables large enough to hold the long pieces of butcher paper; several groups are working out on the floor in the hallway.

Some groups organize by determining who the best reader is. Others begin to make lists; still others simply begin to discuss and draw their dragons.

At 9:07 there is a break. The sixth-grade block is for two periods, English and reading. Third period, the students go to PE; fourth period, they are back with Donna for social studies.

Construction of Meaning

At the beginning of second period, Donna brings the group together: "Imagine you have completed your dragon," she says. "Think about how it looks visually and spatially. Use your linguistic abilities to determine what the author tells you about the dragon." Donna believes strongly in the impact and importance of Howard Gardner's seven intelligences model, and weaves this throughout her curriculum to better meet the needs of all her students. She continues, drawing attention to the books lining the chalktray: "You may want to consult, not copy, these books. Remember you are looking at an Asiatic dragon—Graeme Base provides a look at all kinds of dragons: East, West, tropical … I want to share a little Chinese wisdom from Ed Young's book. If we immerse ourselves in the Chinese, and see how they see things, we'll understand *Dragonwings* a bit better … So just sit and listen." As she finishes the piece on virtue, she reminds the students to think about the Chinese culture, and how that is reflected in their portrayal of the Imperial dragon.

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Donna has found she must structure learning experiences to also address social and emotional aspects. She includes lots of collaborative group work to practice problem solving. Donna reflects on the inclusion of two students who were in pull-out situations at the beginning of the year. She and her team partner asked to give the full inclusion a try. "I think it has been significant for those two because their social and emotional needs would not have been met," she says. "They would have just really become more and more isolated, segregated, stigmatized. They have made academic growth that we wouldn't have been seen in the pull-out program."

Social Interaction

As the period progresses, most groups have focused on the head of the dragon, or other aspects that had been very explicitly described by Yep in the book. Some students do go through and list them out from the text.

Donna writes much of her own curriculum, based on community and district frameworks, standards, and expectations. She considers which of these are appropriate to work on, and then fits them to the class personality. What skills? What processes? What content? She always tries to provide choice and many opportunities for decisionmaking within projects or experiences. Integration is always a primary goal in her curriculum planning, with her team partner as well as within the skills and content. She works at making the learning authentic for her students, emphasizing real life, school-to-work, and school-to-life. Across these contexts, she weaves in her increasing understanding of each student in her classroom and their individual needs.

Strategies in Context

Donna says: "You've got to ask yourself, 'Who's doing the work?' Now behind the scenes is one thing. But if the teacher is working in the classroom really hard, and the students are not working, then you don't have an activity-based classroom. Somehow, you've got to make sure the kids are not just receiving. The kids need to be doing. Otherwise you're expecting them to always learn a second-hand experience. It's got to involve activity … it can be quiet, or it can be noisy, but you need to have active involvement. It's thinking of ways where kids can always be thinking. How can we help students be successful and at the same time hold expectations high, *higher* than they may think they can reach? Then, the tricky part is not to be afraid to let the kids fail. That's often when the real learning takes place."

Engagement

"The power is in the question," she says. It is important to not only be able to stay with a student long enough to finish the thought and process, but to also know the questions to ask to get them there. Donna believes it is important to help young people figure things out on their own by asking the right kinds of questions to support them. Her goal is to lead students to independence as readers and writers, in ways that support their individual strengths and strategies.

As she focuses on the important goals of collaboration and supportive social interaction, Donna pays close and thoughtful attention to how she groups students for learning. She considers the personalities of students and the time of year—the beginning of the year requires more training, while the end of the year experiences require independence in working in groups. Because of the inclusion situation, she must think in terms of ability rather than ability grouping. Donna focuses on ways to group students so that they can support one another's learning. She also assesses their collaboration on group projects and writing activities. Students are responsible for acknowledging and articulating group processes, with a focus on how these experiences affect their learning.

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By the end of the second period, her students are reluctant to move on to their next class. One student wonders aloud, "Why is it that the period, the time between 9:05 and 9:35, goes by just like that?" The students are engaged. Donna's efforts to attend to the whole child are succeeding. This class is growing as readers and writers.

Helping Students Stretch to New Heights

Reading & Writing

The sixth-graders return from PE. On the overhead, the agenda for the social studies period is outlined:

S.S.: Write script for "Meet the Press."

The focus is ancient Greece. The students have already been given this assignment; yesterday they formed groups in which they will collaborate to write a script employing historical figures from this time period. The goal is for students to synthesize important historical information and retell it through the voices of important people of the times in a talk show/news program format. Today's activity is a model for them as they are about to begin writing their scripts. Donna invites input on their progress thus far: "Raise your hand if you have a name for your show?" The kids respond: "Time Travel News," "Daily News," "Time Skippers," "Someone Stole My Lines."

Donna and two student assistants move three desks to the front of the room, facing the rest of the class. They tape up a sign: "Meet the Greek Press"; then, they label each participant: "Guest Newsperson—Plato Archimedes," "Hostess—Athena of Thates" (Greek names made up by the students), and "Famous Guest—Alexander the Great." Donna reminds the rest of the class that they will do a much, much better job with props, etc. and begins the activity. Each person has a script, and they are ready to go. Again, she reminds them to notice things in the script, encouraging them to take theirs beyond the one they will be watching. As the hostess and guest newsperson ask questions of the famous guest, the students learn information about Alexander the Great.

Strategies In Context

After the reading of the script is completed, Donna invites the rest of the class to comment and critique: "It's OK to be critical …" Through this conversation, they create a list of criteria for their own scripts:

- About 15 minutes in length—longer than the model presented in class
- Give everyone enough to do—keep all participants "on track"
- Need to look at the audience
- Reporters can ask audience to participate
- Can be written on the computer—it is a lot easier to read

It's time to go to work. Donna counts down from five; the groups of three or four students form where they met yesterday and begin to work on their script. Some groups are using a social studies text book as a reference. One group works collaboratively at the one computer station in the classroom, while other groups discuss the historical figures they will include. Several students consult encyclopedias. Donna reminds them, "All of you have to write the script and the questions."

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In one group, a student has taken on the task of note taker and works hard to get down all of their ideas. She is one of the twins who had been in pull-out programs in the past. In this inclusion program, she has gained the confidence to participate with her peers, knowing her strengths and her limitations. Now she is willing to participate in this type of activity as an equal with her peers. Her ideas are valued, and she can act as the scribe. Her strategy is to find help in transcribing her notes for others through an aide. As Donna observes: "She can articulate what she needs help on, and there are no excuses. You do what everybody else does. You just have to realize that you have to seek help at different points in the process."

Social Interaction

In order to raise personal and academic expectations for those traditionally pulled out for special services, Donna and her teammates had to help the students adopt the stance that the expectations of them were going to be the same as for others. This was a switch for them. Donna observes these students often had a tendency not to step up to what the real world was going to expect out of them. They must say to themselves: "Yes, it can be hard, but I can read, and I can write to my ability just as well as anybody. I must do my best."

Her choices and design of curriculum are intended to support students' learning as well as to stretch and challenge them into new realms. For example, she chose *Dragonwings* because of the gang connections and issues within the book that are similar to those her own students are facing. This text has given the class opportunities to stretch their thinking, and relate to realistic aspects of the story. For her students who do not have the background knowledge to support understanding of *Dragonwings*, she has tried to provide experiences to provide necessary background. She has shown pictures of San Francisco, both currently and at the turn of the century, when the story is taking place.

Background Knowledge & Prior Experience

Donna reflects upon the personality of adolescents. While a teacher can expect some kind of background knowledge in a middle schooler, it is not always in their nature to share or ask questions. Often, they prefer to keep quiet. As a teacher, you often don't know. Do they not know? Did they not have that experience? As a teacher, you need to be willing to try things, and you need to be an astute observer of young people.

Donna provides a wide variety of literature to encourage a respect for many different cultures. She believes that differences are within people and go beyond culture and color. She sees no better way in a classroom community to address respect for differences than through literature and writing. Students can learn vicariously that you don't have to like someone to respect them. This kind of stretching—to see the relevance of understanding different cultures in a predominately white community—is Donna's way of preparing her students to live in a global society.

Donna's students are also preparing for Author's Night. They have been working throughout the spring to write and publish illustrated books. Each student purchased a blank, hardbound book in which to present their completed stories, complete with publisher, acknowledgments, dedications, and biographic information on the author, accompanied by a photo. The books are displayed along the top of a low bookshelf in the back of the room, ready to be presented to their public. Again, Donna has provided opportunities for students to use and stretch their abilities.

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She finds ways to encourage writing throughout the curriculum. One way in which she does this is to invite an author to share works in progress with her students. After the author visits, students can offer ongoing feedback as a review group. Donna meets after school with those students who are interested, and their comments are e-mailed to the author as suggestions. Students are quick to mention both of these experiences as important to their own learning.

Monitoring Reading Development

There are many ways to challenge students in this inclusion classroom. All are involved, and all are provided with experiences to help them look beyond their own abilities and their own experiences, to question, and to become independent learners.

Donna uses assessment to stretch her students and herself. She lets them know she's assessing them before they begin a task or project, and often solicits their input to create the criteria and type of assessment to be used. She might invite them in by saying: "Okay, now we're coming to the point where we're going to wrap this up. And all along here I've been emphasizing different things. What do you think, get into my head now. What would be fair? What should I put on the rubric, the evaluation form?" Self-reflection, particularly on big projects, is used to help the students reflect upon the expectations she has been modeling. And, their responses let her know whether she has been communicating expectations clearly to the students.

Her assessment also continues to encourage them to be independent and thoughtful students: "I tell them, *never* let your teacher keep you in the dark. If your teacher doesn't tell you how she's going to assess you, what's going to be on that test, or what the form of the test is going to be, *you* have to ask. You have to hold the teacher accountable. You need to know how to do it respectfully."

Donna believes teachers need to keep young mentally. A teacher has to keep learning and have a willing spirit. She bases instructional decisions on observations she's made in her classroom.

To Donna, teaching is a way of always doing research, figuring and testing things out. She is committed to public education, and to the success of each student in her classroom. In reflection, she has summed up her teaching with an insight from the movie, *Mr. Holland's Opus:* "Maybe it's time you thought of your students as a symphony." To Donna, her many students are just that: a symphony.

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BARRY HOONAN

SIXTH GRADE

Emily Dickinson School is located in a rapidly growing section of Redmond, Washington, a largely professional community (headquarters of Microsoft, Inc.) on Lake Washington in the Seattle area. In the past six years, the school has grown from a population of 400 to 1,000 students in grades K-6. Numerous portable classrooms have been added as the school has grown; the effect is of a fast-growing city, attaching subdivisions to itself as they spring up. Barry Hoonan's sixth-grade classroom is in one of the portables, sitting at the end of a walkway about 50 yards from the main building.

Opening the Door, Inviting Them In

Rich Literate Environments

Hundreds of books line the room on specially made shelves; many of the fiction titles are in sets of six to eight copies. Racks around the room and cupboards hold more books, and plastic crates contain magazines, among them issues of *Why Not?*, the student magazine produced by Barry's classes for the past six years.

The class feels like a busy library at the start of the school day. It is welcoming and cozy. Twenty-four students sit at tables, on a couch, on beanbag chairs reading, a pleasant hum of conversation in the background. A note from Barry on the whiteboard near the couch serves as a reminder, *I always use a soft voice.* At a desk in the corner, a graduate student quietly administers a reading interview (Goodman, Watson, & Burke, 1987) to a student. Barry confers with one boy about a book the boy is reading, pulling down a wall map to point out a location critical to the story.

Models & Demonstrations

Twenty minutes into the school day, Barry tells the students to finish the page they're reading and assemble on the rug in front of the couch. For the next several minutes he tells them about spending the previous evening at a bookstore where Suzanne Fisher Staples, a writer of young adult fiction, gave a reading. He displays her newest book, *Dangerous Skies;* describes some similarities to a book the students have read and discussed in class, Lois Lowry's *The Giver;* solicits student comments about possible connections between it and other books; and recommends it. Noting that he'll soon be ordering new titles to add to the room's collection, he asks for volunteers to read the book and decide whether to include it in the purchase list for next year. Several students volunteer, and a schedule to read and pass the book along is devised on the spot.

Engagement

At the start of the school year, Barry asks questions of the students to create the initial literacy experiences in the class. "I ask them what is reading about, what they are reading, and what have they enjoyed," he says. "Then I start reading and I tell them about the books I've read. I put out books, and I find out relatively quickly who the really passionate readers are and who would rather talk during silent reading."

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He describes how he encourages students to choose their own books and to discuss them with each other, often with a simple "What's up with books?" As student favorites begin to circulate, he invites them, usually later in September, to recommend titles for the first literature group of the year. He describes the process: "I'll say to the kids, what are the best books we've read? Then we make a list, and I'll either have them or I go out and buy them. So the first literature group we launch is based on the books that we as a group have selected." Students choose a book, based on classmates' recommendations, for their first literature group. Each group, typically with four to six students, agrees on a reading schedule for the book and meets regularly to discuss their responses. Barry notes that student voice and choice are important both in the selection of the book and in the timetable the group agrees on to complete the book. He is particularly concerned that the less fluent readers not "cave into the pressure" from faster readers to finish a book quickly. Everyone gets a voice in setting up the reading schedule.

Social Interaction

A student comments on the value of literature groups in addition to his independent reading. "Sometimes you need more people to talk to about a book, when there's a lot in it," he says. And Barry shares a recent comment from a student, self-described as a "two on a five-point scale" as a reader, who says he finds being part of a literature group helpful because it structures him and cuts down on distractions when he reads.

Complex Thinking

Throughout the year, students continue to read self-chosen books independently and in small literature groups. In January, Barry asks them if they're willing to play "the believing game," that is, to believe that a book he has chosen for them will satisfy as much as their own choices have. This January, he offered Lois Lowry's *The Giver* and Mildred Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, asking students to sign up for a literature group on either one. As Barry says, "Some books are so rigorous and take such a great deal of prior knowledge, examination, and review that you can fulfill their potential so much more in a literature group." In literature groups, Barry helps struggling readers by directing their reading more, suggesting, for example that they reread a part with him or act out a part. This common experience of the book builds students' comprehension as well as their confidence.

Barry encourages students to use drawing as a response to reading, a technique called "Sketch to Stretch" (Short, Harste, and Burke, 1996). "If I showed you my literature journal, you would see lots of drawings," he explains. "So, when I show kids the strategy, they see this as something that I do. And I think it's key when you're working with struggling readers that they don't see you as trying to rescue them. Rather, they see you as participating, showing them some ways of making sense of the reading." Often, Barry invites all the students to sketch immediately after a read aloud, then to talk about their responses.

Strategies in Context

This morning, as Barry disperses the students from the rug after talking about *Dangerous Skies*, he sets them up for reading workshop with a reminder about how to use their time—reading and responding to their reading. Aware that some students don't naturally choose to write in response to reading, Barry asks for written responses selectively and always writes along with his students. He's found that having students "popcorn" share their responses (make quick oral comments) in the large group helps them see that the purpose of such writing is to make sense of the text. As a group, the students refine their interpretations, using their written responses to dip back into the text for a closer look.

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Barry flips through his own journal, crammed with notes and full of writing and illustrations. A journal, he says, should be a "house for memorable books." Why organize a reading journal? "How many of you have read five books this year?" he asks. "10? 15? 20? 40?" Hands go up and stay up. Most students have read upwards of 15 books this year, so the need for some organization to their journal responses is obvious to all. He'll be coming around to meet with students during reading workshop to talk about the personal booklists they're developing and their readers' timelines. He reminds them that he's interested in their opinions about reading trends and their recommendations for books to order for next year.

Barry has another reason for having students organize their reading journals. "We have to make our texts memorable, because two years from now, if they (the students) diminish as readers, what will they have?" he says. "If they have a notebook, maybe they can say, 'Well, at one point I was a reader. I read everything Karen Hess and Jerry Spinelli put out that year.'"

Right now, it's clear that these students are readers. How did they get that way? Barry explains, "You have to offer choice because when you offer choice, you offer ownership and you offer kids the way in. But, by the same token, I'm constantly wondering what are the ways I can broaden their field." Barry works to build his students' trust in him as a literate guide. He shares his own reading, his encounters with authors, insights gained from professional conferences and literate conversations with friends.

Opportunity to Read

Two students note how much more they've read in this class than in previous years, proudly sharing their journals containing a mix of collage and written responses to books. A boy says, "I read way more in this class than I ever did before." Barry talked with him about books, found out his interests, recommended books to him, then talked with him as he read, clearing up misunderstandings and sharing his own responses.

The transitions in this classroom feel like invitations. After 40 minutes of reading workshop, with students variously reading and responding to books of their own choice, Barry walks to the front of the room and opens the book, *Crash*, by Jerry Spinelli, signaling time to listen as he reads it aloud. Barry pulls the students into the story, stopping periodically to get their responses to the character Crash, and to decisions the writer made, such as using a swear word in a book kids will read. Consensus of the group is that "damn" is what Crash would say; using "dang"—as Barry does when he reads it aloud—would ring false.

Reading & Writing

Later in the morning, Barry's mini-lesson before writing workshop involves his own writing, a physical description of a character patterned after one of Spinelli's in *Crash*. After describing the effect he's after, Barry reads his draft and solicits suggestions on how to improve it. It's an invitation from one writer to others: "How is this working?" "Am I getting the effect I want?" "What doesn't work for you in this?" The student responses are thoughtful, informed, and sincere. Barry's description of the character's pants being too short seems confusing; are they riding low on his hips or riding too high above his shoe tops? Suggestions are made and modified. After several minutes of this, Barry asks how much time he should spend on this as a writer. Is it worth it? A student asserts that it is because, after all, the impression the reader gets of this character at the beginning of the story will stay with him throughout the book.

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Decisions, Decisions: Student Responsibility

At this point, Barry admonishes the students to think about the decisions they need to make during writing workshop about where to spend their time. Today is Thursday; they have a deadline for a writing project coming up on Monday.

Writing workshop begins with 10 minutes of sustained writing; Barry sets the timer and everyone, including him, puts pen to paper and writes. A whiteboard near the couch reminds students of writing workshop rules:

1. Work hard and quietly.
2. Save everything. Date everything.
3. Focus. Concentrate on making the writing interesting.
4. Be creative. Risk! Get your ideas down on paper.
5. Find a piece to declare your own!

Below the rules is a reminder to produce four pages each week.

When the 10 minutes are up, students continue to write or confer with a partner for feedback on their writing. Two boys work together on a piece at the computer, others sit at tables, on the couch or on beanbag chairs. Two other boys discuss how much of a lengthy dialogue to keep in a paper one of them is working on.

Sharon works with Barry, getting suggestions for her current writing project, a quiz on responsibility to be included in *Why Not?* The quiz is a popular feature of young adult magazines, and she's clearly familiar with the genre. Barry asks questions to help Sharon make some decisions: What's the purpose of the quiz? Who will take it? Sharon has decided the purpose is for the readers, her classmates, to find out how responsible they are by responding to scenarios she's creating around such topics as babysitting and homework. He encourages Sharon to keep focusing on the use and audience for the quiz, compliments her on her work so far, and moves on to work with another student.

Rich Literate Environments

Venn diagrams that compare books and personal reading timelines around the room show the variety in students' reading habits and experiences. In addition, displays of recently completed "expert projects" reinforce the the range of interests and choices operating in the class. The topics include the effects of racism, the life cycle of a star, wolves, castles, geysers, and Van Gogh. Connections to students' reading are also evident. The boy whose expert project is on castles tells the visitor his favorite books are the *Redwall* series by Brian Jacques, fantasy adventures set in medieval times. Several expert projects will be featured in the upcoming issue of *Why Not?;* students prepare their submissions during writing workshop.

Writing workshop lasts today for 40 minutes. Then, Barry calls the group together again on the rug and invites anyone who wants feedback on a work in progress to share it. Three boys are writing up their interview with a school employee, a building engineer, for *Why Not?* Before they read their draft, Barry asks them where they want group response or help. They are wondering how to cut the length of direct quotes, and still accurately report the interviewee's statements. Group members listen as the boys take turns reading their draft, then individuals suggest statements to cut, and terms to clarify, such as the difference between custodian and building engineer. The group decides that everything the interviewee says does not have to be quoted; sometimes paraphrasing long statements makes the point more clearly.

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Creating a Community Through Reading

Barry notes a number of professional mentors in his development of this student-centered, inquiry-based classroom. The work of Donald Graves, Jerry Harste, and Kathy Short has helped him make important connections between reading and writing instruction. Making professional presentations, locally and nationally, with teacher educator colleagues Nancy Johnson and Bonnie Campbell-Hill has helped him look at his classroom as a work in progress, a place where he continues to refine his thinking as he works with student readers and writers. And his work with Seattle teacher and teacher educator Kathy Egawa has helped him view assessment as a conversation: yes, he collects information on numbers and types of books students have read, their written and oral responses to books, and the strategies they're using when they read and write. But the assessment is the interpretation of what this information means. It's important for Barry to talk with students about why certain books have influenced them and where their current reading and writing is likely to take them.

His professional development experiences have validated his way of working with students. Talking specifically about a reading program, Barry says there are two essentials: silent reading time and teacher read alouds. Yet he notes that many teachers view both as extras, rewards when other work is done (silent reading time) or a way to calm kids down on Friday afternoon (teacher read alouds).

Finally, what other goals does he have for students as readers? "At the heart of my teaching," Barry says, "is the hope that kids will grow as people during the course of the year, and so I strongly consider social implications. How can we become a community? And how can we become more sensitive and aware of our world? I believe literature provides kids and myself a way to understand that." When Barry chooses books to read aloud, he considers whose voice may be new (and needed) in his classroom: strong girl characters *(Mick Hart Was Here, Heart Light);* members of minority groups *(Thunder Cave, Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry).* "You don't necessarily have to be African-American to step into and identify with *The Watsons Go to Birmingham, 1963,*" he says. "Much of the story is about the quirky and laughable everyday moments in family life, and I think we can all identify with that!"

"The books are letting us carefully and safely talk about how we want things in our world and how things are. I think we become more worldly citizens when we read books aloud or read books in literature groups and talk about them. So what do I do with this mostly Caucasian group? I hopefully fill the room with some questions and literature, and I listen."

Resources

Goodman, Y., Watson, D., & Burke, C. (1987). *Reading miscue inventory: Alternative procedures.* Katonah, NY: Richard C. Owen.

Short, K., Harste, J., & Burke, C. (1996). *Creating classrooms for authors and inquirers* (2nd ed.) Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

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CONCLUSION

Our journey to classrooms in the Pacific Northwest has allowed us to move through the grades, sharing the literacy experiences of kindergartners through sixth-graders. As we traveled, we have seen that while particular issues may predominate at certain stages of literacy learning, the reading process in these classrooms always focuses on meaning, helping children expand what they know about the world, about language, and about print to become engaged, independent readers.

In the primary classrooms, we have seen teachers helping students attend to the alphabetic principle, learning how print carries a message. When Christy Holtman's first-graders "read the room" they see the many functions of print in their classroom. A small group in Cindy Martindale's second-grade class takes part in a shared reading of *Max's Sandwich*, making predictions and responding to the story before they focus on some phonics elements they need to master.

At intermediate and upper grades, we have watched teachers helping students expand the range and control of their reading strategies. Third-graders in Marty Pellman's class apply their knowledge of the elements of fiction as they respond to each other's original stories. Donna Mikkelson reminds her sixth-graders to read between the lines and apply historical knowledge to their group drawing of the dragon in Lawrence Yep's *Dragonwings*. From the beginning, students in these classrooms are using reading to develop new understandings about themselves and their world.

The vignettes have shown us research-based principles—core understandings—about reading in action, for example, reading as a constructive, meaning-making activity; the variety of ways in which children develop phonemic awareness and phonics knowledge; the importance of engagement and of opportunity to read. In visiting these classrooms, we've been impressed—often dazzled—by the skill with which these teachers make reading accessible and enjoyable for children. This is not to say that reading comes easily for all the children we observed, but in these classrooms, children are learning how to solve reading problems and monitor their growth as readers.

In our travels for this collection, we have been struck repeatedly by the sense of the classroom as a community of learners. As Cindy Martindale says, "I think teachers need to remember what it's like to be learners. If you're not a learner yourself, I don't think you can be as effective with kids." These teachers have a passion for learning and for books, which they model for children. They are confident that their students will learn to read, finding personal and social uses for literacy that will keep the process going, helping them become effective, reflective readers.

The starting place for these vignettes—teachers' knowledge in action—turns out to be a fine conclusion as well. Our journey has shown us that while there is no one best method of teaching reading, there is something we can and should bank on for children's success in reading: teachers' knowledge about the learners in their classroom and the process of learning to read.

ABOUT THE TEACHERS

Karl Wolf

Karl Wolf has been a kindergarten teacher for 22 years at Central Elementary School in Helena, Montana. His previous teaching experience includes kindergarten, first, second, fourth, and sixth grades in Arizona and Colorado. He has had the opportunity to help coordinate and evaluate an ongoing pre-K through pre-first grade developmental program in the Helena School. In addition, he has been invited to present his individualized instructional methods at teaching seminars in California. Currently, he is pursuing a master's degree in literacy and serving as a member of the State Office of Public Instruction's Committee on Teacher Education Program Standards. Karl may be contacted at k.wolf@internetmci.com or by phone at (406) 442-9637 at home, or at (406) 447-8816 at Central Elementary School. His home address is 5160 Ferret Drive, Helena, Montana 59602.

Christy Holtman

Christy Holtman began her elementary teaching career in Meridian, Idaho, in the fall of 1976. She has been teaching for the White Salmon School District for the past 16 years. She received her B.S. from Boise State University and her M.A. from the University of Portland. In 1992, she received Washington state's excellence in education award, the Christa McAuliffe Award. In 1995, she became a member of the state of Washington's leadership in reading team. Presently, she is a member of the literacy team for ESD 112 and is active on her district's language arts committee. She is currently teaching first grade at Whitson Elementary in White Salmon, Washington. If you wish to contact her, you may do so by contacting the school at (509) 493-1560, or by e-mail: choltman@gorge.net.

Mary Loughlin

Mary Loughlin has taught elementary and junior high grades for more than 30 years. Her first teaching position was with the Peace Corps in Ethiopia as a junior high ESL teacher. Following that assignment, she taught middle grades in Seattle, Washington; Washington, DC; and Portland, Oregon, her hometown. In the late '70s, she switched to the primary grades and fell in love with first-grade teaching with its emphasis on beginning literacy. Outside of the classroom, she has taught literacy workshops for Portland Public Schools, served on several district literacy committees and worked with the board of the local International Reading Association (IRA) council. At Sabin Elementary, where she has taught for the past 21 years, she currently serves on the technology committee and is working on the school improvement plan. You can contact Mary at Sabin Elementary School, 4013 NE 18th Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97212, (503) 916-6181 or by e-mail: maryl@teleport.com.

Cindy Martindale

Cindy Martindale has been a teacher for 22 years. She comes from central New York State where she earned both her bachelor's and master's degrees at State University of New York College at Cortland. For the past 10 years, she has worked for the Anchorage School District as a teacher of kindergarten, first, or second grade. She is currently in the kindergarten year of her second K-1-2 loop. Outside the classroom, she has been involved in the Alaska Association for the Education of Young Children (AAEYC) board at both the local and state levels. In her school district, she has served on the curriculum committees for science, social studies, math, and reading, and has done staff development classes for primary teachers in these areas. In her school, she is currently involved on the site team and as a First Steps™ resource teacher. She feels most fortunate to combine her favorite things every day—children, books, and learning. You may reach Cindy at home at teddy@alaska.net or at Williwaw Elementary, 1200 San Antonio, Anchorage, Alaska 99508, (907) 337-1581.

Jacquie Whitmore

Jacquie Whitmore's classroom experience includes five years as a K-3 multiage teacher in Moose Pass, Alaska, and one year as a third-grade teacher in Tucson, Arizona. She also has seven years' experience as a Title I Reading/Language Arts Specialist in the Anchorage School District. She is a past president of the Alaska State Language Arts Framework Committee as well as district and state Reading/Language Arts Performance Standards Committees. She currently teaches a first- and second-grade multiage class at Polaris K-12 Optional School in Anchorage. When not teaching, Jacquie spends time with her eleven-year-old daughter Kaeli, often shuttling her between hockey, snowboarding, and soccer practices. She can be reached via e-mail at Whitemore_Jacquie@msmail.asd.k12.ak.us or at PO Box 111858, Anchorage, Alaska 99511.

Marty Pellman

Marty Pellman began her teaching career at Fontana School District in 1990. She has a B.A. from San Diego State University in arts and letters. She completed her studies in bilingual education at California State University–San Bernardino. In California she taught in a bilingual setting. During that time she was presented with the Arrowhead Reading Teacher of the Year Award. In partnership with a colleague, she taught Literacy in the Bilingual Classroom at California State University–San Bernardino and published an article on problems encountered in the implementation of whole language in the classroom. This article appeared in *Primary Voices* magazine, a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) publication. She has been a presenter at the California Association of Bilingual Education (CABE), the Whole Language Umbrella Conference and the Whole Language Summer Institute. She is presently teaching Spanish immersion at Government Hill Elementary in Anchorage, Alaska. Marty can be reached at Government Hill Elementary, 525 Bluff Drive, Anchorage, Alaska 99501; phone (907) 277-4223; e-mail: Pellman_Marty@msmail.asd.k12.ak.us.

Elva Cerda

Elva Cerda is a native Spanish speaker who was raised in Texas and migrated to Alaska in search of adventure. She is certified as an elementary teacher, K-12/special educator with a specialty in deafness, K-12/school counselor and as a teacher of English as a second language. She has taught in Alaska for 14 years, five of those years traveling throughout the state of Alaska as an education specialist working with Alaska Native students in remote villages. The last four years she has been thrilled to be able to utilize her native language in providing special education and Title I reading instruction to students in a Spanish immersion program. She is knowledgeable in educational issues relative to second language learners. She is experienced with assessment, identification, and programming of students of limited English proficiency with disabilities. She can be reached at Government Hill Elementary School, 525 Bluff Drive, Anchorage, Alaska 99501, phone (907) 277-4224, or by e-mail: Cerda_Elva@msmail.asd.k12.ak.us.

Joanne Johnson

Joanne Johnson has taught in Springfield schools for the past 30 years with a special interest in language arts and literacy. She holds a master's degree and a reading endorsement from the University of Oregon. Her early teaching years were spent with primary children, and during the last 10 years she has worked with intermediate readers and writers. During the 1994 school year, she represented Oregon as the Teacher of the Year and was selected as a Milken National Educator in 1995. She was awarded the Christa McAuliffe Grant to work with teachers in a three-part model in which they observed her classroom, she coached them in their classrooms, and they all met in a university class to discuss their learning. Most importantly, her joy in life has come from being in the classroom and learning from the children.

Donna Mikkelson

Donna Mikkelson has been a language arts teacher in grades six through 12 for 23 years. She is currently teaching reading, English, and social studies on a sixth-grade team at Meridian Middle School in Meridian, Idaho. In addition to teaching sixth-graders, she has served as an adjunct instructor at Boise State University and has been actively involved in district-level curriculum writing. She serves on the Meridian School District's staff development committee and is a mentor in the district's new teacher mentor program. Presently, she is a national board certification candidate. You may contact her at Meridian Middle School, 1507 West 8th Street, Meridian, Idaho 83642, phone (208) 888-3002, or by e-mail: mikkel@micron.net.

Barry Hoonan

Barry Hoonan loves the balance of teaching in the classroom and sharing his class stories, struggles, and strategies in workshops with teachers. For 17 years, Barry has taught a range of students, from first to seventh grade, and has twice taught in Great Britain on the Fulbright Teacher Exchange. He currently spends lots of his time sharing poetry, poring over great books, and publishing a magazine with students in a fourth-, fifth- and sixth-grade multiage classroom on Bainbridge Island, Washington. Barry serves as a consultant to school districts conducting poetry, writing, and arts integration workshops and is currently working with a cadre of presenters on the Washington State Writing Essential Learnings middle years format. He is a contributor to *Literature Circles and Response* (Christopher Gordon, publisher) and is awaiting the Spring 1999 release of *Inquiry and Multiple Ways of Knowing* (NCTE, publisher), which he is co-authoring with Drs. Beth Berghoff, Kathy Egawa, and Jerry Harste. Barry can be contacted by phone at (206) 855 0435, or by e-mail: bhoonan@bainbridge.wednet.edu.

APPENDIX

IRA/NCTE STANDARDS FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

The vision guiding these standards is that all students must have the opportunities and resources to develop the language skills they need to pursue life's goals and to participate fully as informed, productive members of society. These standards assume that literacy growth begins before children enter school as they experience and experiment with literacy activities—reading and writing, and associating spoken words with their graphic representations. Recognizing this fact, these standards encourage the development of curriculum and instruction that make productive use of the emerging literacy abilities that children bring to school. Furthermore, the standards provide ample room for the innovation and creativity essential to teaching and learning. They are not prescriptions for particular curriculum or instruction.

Although we present these standards as a list, we want to emphasize that they are not distinct and separable; they are, in fact, interrelated and should be considered as a whole.

1. Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

8. Students use a variety of technological and informational resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

9. Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.

10. Students whose first language is not English make use of their first language to develop competency in the English language arts and to develop understanding of content across curriculum.

11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

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